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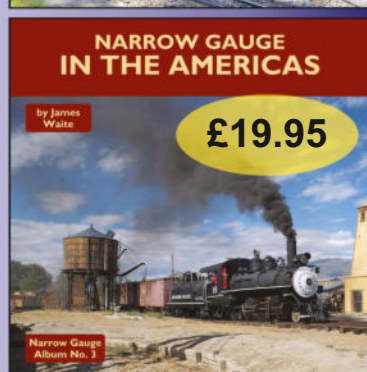
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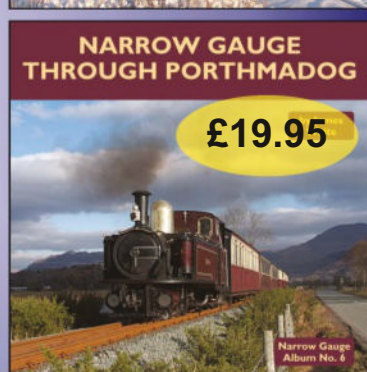


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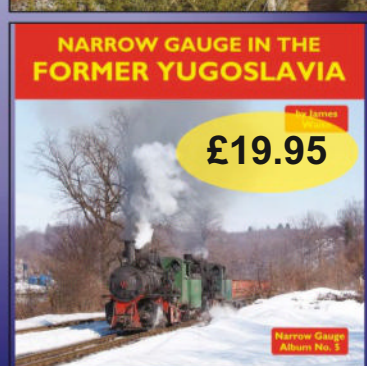
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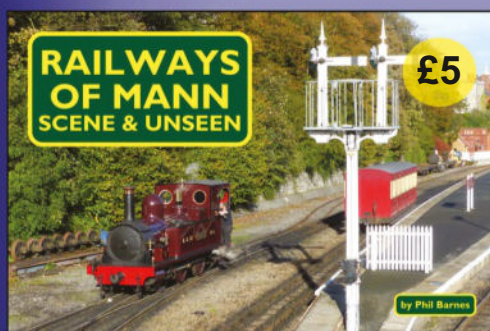
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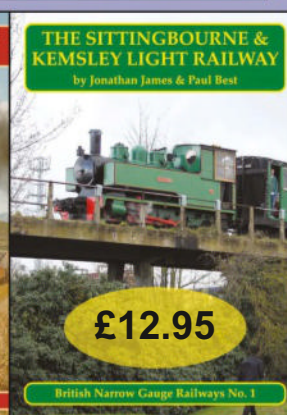
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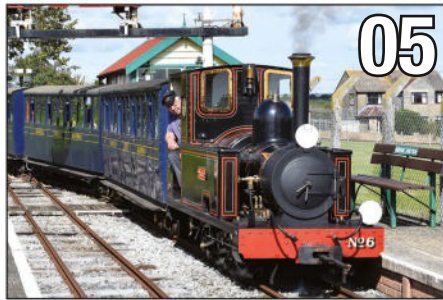
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A model inspiration

Cover: In the narrow gauge world there is little to compare with the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway with many enthusiasts harbouring an ambition to visit this remarkable survivor in India. American enthusiast *Mike Massee* did just that, capturing superb photos such as this – he tells us all about it in this issue.

The inset shows a typical view for *NGW* reader *David Rowbotham* when in the role of blockman on the Talylyn Railway. What's involved? Find out in our pages...

FIRST LINES

No-one's getting younger...

Welcome to the August issue of *Narrow Gauge World* and the first story you will read in our pages is the sad news of the impending closure to the public of the Gartell Light Railway in Somerset – an occurrence that provides a salutary warning for the future of many of our heritage lines.

Back in the 1950s when preservation got into gear, led by the Talylyn Railway as we've been celebrating over the past three issues, running a railway was seen as a pretty cool thing to do for particularly (though by no means exclusively) men and crucially young men.

Look at the photos of railway revival projects underway during that period and you will see a lot of young faces, and the journals of the older lines consistently carry 'looking back' features from long-term volunteers describing how they hitched or purloined lifts across country to get involved in these projects, at ages that today one would not consider letting one's offspring off the leash on their own.

Meanwhile currently making their very tortuous way through Parliament are efforts by certain politicians to achieve changes to a very old law originally intended to prevent children working in coal mines, but which today technically means that any railway that has volunteers of under adult age is breaking the law...

The real problem, however, is that

those young volunteers of the early days are now old, and to put it bluntly dying off, and they are not being replaced by enough of the youngsters of today who have many other distractions. And it's an issue that affects the narrow gauge sector most of all.

Why? Because while reduced numbers of volunteers on the big railways can be to an extent absorbed, it's the little lines, especially the private ones, that are most at risk, and these are mainly narrow gauge. For an enthusiast wanting his own railway it's a lot easier to lay 2ft gauge track than 4ft 8½in, and to operate it with a few friends.

As a result the narrow gauge sector has a number of such lines, and now we are beginning to lose them. The Gartell is a case in point – John Gartell's thank-yous as he announced the impending closure were mostly to friends who have helped with the line almost since its inception.

Lines that we have lost in recent times following the passing of their creators have included the Abbey Light Railway in 2012 and the Rhiw Valley Light Railway in 2022. Unless we can find a way to make running a narrow gauge railway something today's young people want to do, that closure rate will only increase in frequency in future years...

Andrew Charman



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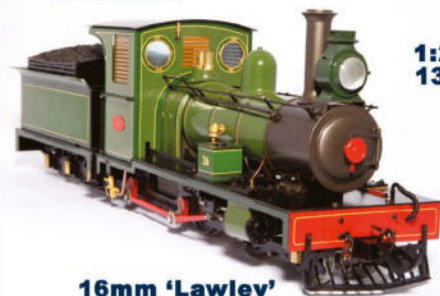
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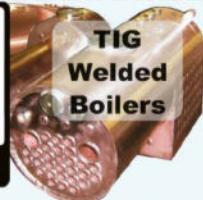
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Gartell to shut its doors at end of '26 season

The Gartell Light Railway will close permanently to the public following its final open day of 2026 in October, the private Somerset line has announced.

Revealing the forthcoming closure on the line's social media feeds, owner and co-creator of the 2ft gauge line John Gartell said that age had caught up with the team of volunteers that runs it, adding: "The amount of work required to keep the locomotives, coaches, platforms, permanent way and all other aspects of the railway running must not be underestimated."

He thanked all the volunteers who have worked on the railway since its first open day in 1991; "I hope you are proud of how the railway looks now."

John also indicated that it was not intended to dismantle the line, at least in the short term. "We do intend to keep things operational for a while for special events, just to keep the railway alive a little



longer, without the commitment of regular open days." The future for the stock including three steam locomotives is uncertain though it was announced last month that 0-4-0 'Jean' is to move to the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway (NGW203).

Under and over

John and his father Alan began building the line in 1984, initially using Lister locomotives and wagons acquired from the former Somerset peat industry. The line was constructed on a route running from the family farm and base for the Gartells' earthmoving business at Yenston, near Templecombe, under the trackbed of the standard gauge Somerset & Dorset Railway

before rising to run along the former main line route. Today the Gartell line offers a two-mile round trip to visitors operated using steam, diesel and carriage stock mostly built at the line.

Featured in NGW173 in 2023, the Gartell is one of only two UK narrow gauge lines to cross over itself, the other being the Ffestiniog Railway at Dduallt.

The remaining open days at the Gartell Light Railway in 2026 are on 30th August, 27th September and 25th October.

Above: Gartell Railway owner John Gartell at the regulator of 'Mr G', built in 1998 and named after his father. The signalling on the line is particularly impressive.

Pioneer hydrogen train 'made for narrow gauge'

European railway equipment giant Stadler has unveiled the world's first narrow gauge hydrogen fuel-cell train, which will enter service on 950mm gauge lines on the island of Sardinia.

Fuel cell technology has long been in development as a sustainable fuel, notably in the automotive sector but also for rail – the only emission from a hydrogen fuel cell is water and replacement of the current diesel locomotives operated by Trasporti Regionali della Sardegna (ARST) on lines in Erlen is expected to save more than 2,100 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

ARST has ordered 10 train sets specifically for use on lines connecting Alghero Airport with Mamuntanas, Sassari with Alghero and Sassari with Sorso.

Each unit has a central 'power pack' housing the fuel cells that turn hydrogen gas into electricity, allowing the units to operate on non-electrified lines. The hydrogen is generated by solar power and Stadler describes the entire process as a zero-emission system for the narrow gauge.

Stadler has pioneered the technology and is currently the only manufacturer

building such trains for the narrow gauge – the characteristics of Italian infrastructure required vehicles with a low axle loading and built from lightweight materials.

The Zillertalbahnhof in Austria was originally expected to pioneer the use of hydrogen using Stadler-built units but in May 2024 the project was cancelled in favour of battery-electric units, the line quoting uncertain costs and benefits.

A Stadler spokesman stated that the new Sardinian hydrogen trains would be quieter

and with less vibration compared to diesel units – passengers will enjoy comfortable, air-conditioned, bright interiors, enhanced by large panoramic windows, while a low-floor access allows for easy boarding, especially for those with reduced mobility.

Hydrogen technology is also set to be employed by the Ferrovie della Calabria (FdC) in Italy and Ferrovie Circumetnea (FCE) in Sicily. Stadler is building nine trains for the FdC and two for the FCE at Bussnang, Switzerland.

Photo: Stadler





Steam stuck on shed in latest heatwave

Continuing periods of intensely hot weather are causing major issues for heritage lines running steam locos. The latest heatwave that started at the end of June and continued through much of the first half of July saw several lines forced to roster diesel services instead of steam and in some cases cancel trains, due to both the fear of spray sparks starting lineside fires and concerns for the welfare of locomotive crews on days when the general outside temperature exceeded 35 degrees C.

The wisdom of the winter conversion of the Vale of Rheidol Railway's 2-6-2T 'Prince of Wales' back to oil firing was proven again in the first two weeks of July when the railway changed its roster to run the loco on passenger services alongside its Baguley diesel, replacing coal-fired sisters 'Llywelyn' and 'Owain Glyndwr'. However the railway was also forced to cancel some trains to accommodate the change, while running the oil-fired services is twice as costly compared to coal.

The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway had been first forced to suspend steam service for several days as early as late April – by the end of June more than 20 services had been diesel hauled and this number was set to grow with the further prolonged heatwave in July. Events affected included the railway's popular Vintage Weekend on 18th-19th July, with the 'Great Western set' of the line's three Pickering bogie carriages hauled not by Beyer, Peacock 0-6-0T 'The Earl' but Drewry diesel 'Chattenden'.

Above: All of the atmosphere, much less of the sparks – the Vale of Rheidol line's 'Prince of Wales' has seen a lot of use in the recent extreme heat conditions.

Photo: Andrew Simmonds

Below: Traction duties provided by a former Taiwan Sugar Company Diema diesel instead of the expected steam did not seem to deter a healthy smattering of passengers at the W&LLR on 25th June.

Photo: Andrew Charman



Lynton sets out five years of aims

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway has published a five-year Strategic Plan running to 2031, in a further encouraging sign for progress on the Devon project.

The plan, developed and agreed by the L&B Trust and the Community Interest Company (CIC), sets out the railway's vision, values, ambitions and aims, its producers saying it will provide clarity for members, partners and stakeholders as to the priorities and direction.

Giles Perkins, Chair of the Trust said that he had set himself a goal to provide clarity on the direction of the L&BR within his first 100 days as Chair, adding: "This Strategic Plan sets out our priorities for the period to 2031 providing that much needed transparency, essential in providing confidence to all who are, or will be, part of the development of our world famous narrow-gauge railway."

The plan, which can be downloaded at bit.ly/44yQZEQ, sets a range of aims for the future, including overall strategies such as growing membership, increasing the Trust's standing in the local community and decarbonising its operations.

Specific intentions listed include submitting a planning application for the extension of the railway from Killington Lane to Parracombe Halt, continued investment in and development of the alignment between the Old Station Inn (Blackmoor) and Wistlandpound (reservoir) so that in time it can provide a complementary attraction to current operations centred at Woody Bay, and actively monitoring opportunities to close gaps in the trackbed ownership between Lynton and Wistlandpound, with a view to these being a part of future extensions.

The statement revealing the plan added: "The railway is at a pivotal moment in our evolution with ongoing improvement activities across our sites, the growth of our rolling stock fleet, our formalised closer working with Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust (B&YVRT) who are developing the southern end of the former line and, our desire to increase the length of the operational railway."



■ On 17th June L&B Trust Chair Giles Perkins and Bruce Knights, Chair of Trustees of the Barnstaple & Yeo Valley Railway Trust, signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Chelfham station to formalise roles and responsibilities following the recent agreement between the two organisations to work together (NGW201).



Quarry Hunslet Lady Joan changes its Kent home

The Richmond Light Railway has acquired Hunslet 0-4-0ST 'Lady Joan' (1429/1922) from the line's near neighbours in Kent, the Bredgar and Wormshill Light Railway.

The Port class loco, built in the same year as 'Dolbadarn' now on the Llanberis Lake Railway, was originally named 'No.1' and worked as a quayside shunter at Port Dinorwic. Renaming took place in the 1930s but the loco reverted to No.1 in the 1950s.

The loco has since 1997 been privately owned but based at Bredgar. It is currently out of boiler ticket and will undergo a full evaluation of its condition to ascertain the work required during a future full overhaul.

RLR owner Jeremy Martin said he was extremely pleased to add Lady Joan to the collection at Richmond; "It takes our Quarry Hunslet collection up to four engines and importantly it means that we have an engine from each of the major North Wales slate quarries. Penrhyn is represented by 'Nesta' and 'Elin'; Pen-yr-orsedd by 'Sybil' and Lady Joan providing an example from Dinorwic."

Jeremy added; "Being able to highlight the

importance of narrow gauge rail in the Welsh slate industry all forms part of the Richmond story of showcasing narrow gauge railways and the role they have played in industry across the world."

The loco will be on show at the Richmond line's forthcoming and sold-out Charity Steam Fair in August and also the I/C & Industry day on 12th September. Tickets are still available for this event, which focuses on the internal combustion engine fleet with all available locos operating alongside a couple of ex-industrial steam locos.

Visiting Planet Y Type no 1830, based at the Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum will also be hauling both passenger and the occasional industrial freight train over the course of the day.

Tickets are available online via the railway's Facebook page or at ticketsource.co.uk/RLR. A discount is offered to HRA members.

Above: 'Lady Joan' (centre) takes its place in the Richmond line's growing quarry Hunslet line-up.

Photo: Steve Town



■ From Lady Joan to just Joan... On 24th June the Golden Valley Light Railway held its annual private invitation-only open evening, which saw resident Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT 7529 joined by no 1 'Joan', an 0-4-2 inverted saddle tank built in 1997 by British Railways engineer Alan Civil. The evening marked the locomotive's return to service following overhaul, having last run on the 2ft gauge Derbyshire line in 2017.

Photo: Stuart Chapman

BRIEF LINES



Models aid GVT revival

The Glyn Valley Tramway project at Chirk has benefited from the garden railway show garden created by GVT prime mover Andy Christie at the BBC Gardeners' World Live show at the Birmingham NEC (see page 41). Retailer Garden Railway Specialists of Princes Risborough purchased several full-size railway sleepers for use in the garden (seen above) and then donated them to the GVT following the show.

Oil option for Bure loco

The Bure Valley Light Railway has followed the example of the Vale of Rheidol Railway in partially returning to oil firing. Loco no 8 'John of Gaunt' was originally built as an oil-fired engine and has as part of its 10-year overhaul been modified to allow a rapid transfer to oil firing when needed.

Ashbury carriage on way

The replica of a North Wales Narrow Gauge Railways Ashbury brake composite carriage being built at the Ffestiniog Railway was expected to emerge into the light around the time this issue went to press after final painting. Some work will remain to be done before it can enter regular service.

Boston Lodgers...

Two quarry Hunslets are currently under overhaul at the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge Works as outside contracts. As well as the National Slate Museum's 'Una', which has recently seen work on its bottom end virtually completed, the Bala Lake Railway's 'Winifred' has had its firebox removed and dispatched to the Severn Valley Railway for welding.

Busy youngsters

Some 45 members of the Tallyllyn Railway's 'Tracksiders' family volunteer group descended on the neighbouring Corris Railway on 30th May, carrying out a wide variety of highly useful 'just jobs' on the line.



Terminator is back at Bala...

Activities organised for the Annual General Meeting of the Bala Lake Railway Society on 16th May centred upon two new items of rolling stock.

The line's recently acquired Clayton battery loco (BO483/1976) was officially named 'Terminator', reviving a title it carried when one of three locos supplied new to the Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Crombie on the Firth of Forth in Scotland – its sister locos carried the names 'Rambo' and 'Predator'.

All three locos were subsequently transferred to the MoD site at Havengore Island near Shoeburyness from where Terminator and Rambo were acquired by the Richmond Light Railway. Rambo was

sold to the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, whilst Terminator was purchased by the Bala Lake Railway Society and donated to the railway.

The loco was regauged from 2ft 6in to 600mm gauge, with the wheelsets adjusted at the Ffestiniog Railway's Boston Lodge works, and staff and volunteers at the Bala line undertook a full mechanical overhaul along with a complete repaint.

The new brass nameplates were etched on site by the BLR's Dan Laidlaw and unveiled on the loco by Society Chairman Tim Williams.

On 24th May the Bala line's latest example of recreated Welsh quarry stock entered service, with the inaugural run of

the Penrhyn Quarry Railway Owner's Saloon, BLR Trust Chairman Julian Birley and friends providing appropriate passengers as Julian owns the replica.

The carriage was largely built by David Hale in his garden in Dorset, whilst former BLR general manager Roger Hine and his wife Bobby painted and lined its livery and Mike Hayward attended to the running gear and braking system. The vehicle earned a highly commended accolade at this year's HRA awards.

Above: 'Terminator' is now officially resident on the Bala line while BLR Trust Chairman Julian Birley and his son Thomas enjoyed their ride in the new replica Penrhyn Quarry Owner's Saloon carriage. *Photos: David Jones/BLR*



■ Hunslet 0-4-2ST 'Howard', visiting from the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust, certainly looked the part on 5th July (above) during the South Tynedale Railway's Gala event held over two weekends, but appearances can be deceptive... After working trains over the first weekend unspecified issues saw the loco spend 11th and 12th July on static display.

Services at the Gala were maintained by the line's resident fleet of steam and diesel locos, including the Huwood Hudswell named after its distributor, Huwood & Co. of Gateshead, pictured left at Alston Station.

Photos: James Groundwater



■ Visible progress at the ever-busy Workshop X in early July saw the Kerr, Stuart 'Joffre' 0-6-0 that the team are restoring for the Apedale Valley Railway lowered back to the floor after being rewheeled. It is seen here with behind it Orenstein & Koppel Matheran 740 and the new-build single Fairlie 'Gowrie'.

Elsewhere in the workshop the cosmetic restoration of the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust's Black Hawthorn 0-4-0ST is also making good progress with various cracks in the frames now being welded up.

Photo: Workshop X



Hunslet diesel arrives on the Sittingbourne

The Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway has acquired another locomotive, not long after the purchase of a Clayton battery-electric loco that previously worked at the Royal Naval Armaments Depot (RNAD) in Shoeburyness.

Hunslet 50hp diesel 2266 was built in 1940 for service at another RNAD depot, at Trecwn in Pembrokeshire, west Wales. It remained there until November 1984 when it was one of three 50hp Hunslet locos that moved to the MoD Broughton Moor depot in Cumbria following the arrival of new Baguley-Drewry locos at Trecwn.

At Broughton Moor 2266's smart green with orange lining livery was replaced by yellow and the loco worked until the depot closed in 1992, as did Trecwn in that year.

The Broughton Moor equipment was sold off, one of the Hunslet locos going to the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway where it became 'Scooby' and was heavily modified. No 2266, meanwhile, ended up on a private railway in Somerset. It has now passed to the S&KLR following the closure of the Somerset line and a dispersal sale.

The loco remains in Broughton Moor livery though sadly it no longer has its worksplates, thought to have been lost some time in its military service.

Above: The Hunslet loco after arrival on the Sittingbourne, still in its Broughton Moor livery.

Below: The Clayton battery loco is being referred to as 'Tank II' – whether this is an official name is yet to be confirmed to NGW...



Motor Rail Mania event proves an Apedale hit

The Moseley Railway Trust held its 'Motor Rail Mania' event over the weekend of 27th-28th June at its Apedale Valley Light Railway base in Staffordshire, celebrating the 110th anniversary of the start of locomotive manufacture by the eponymous Bedford-based company.

The large resident fleet of Motor Rail locos were joined by eight visiting engines, including a pair from Leighton Buzzard, two petrol locos kindly loaned by the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust and two locos from the Golden Valley Light Railway. The final pair came from private sites, neither having been seen in public for many years.

In addition to various unusual combinations hauling the passenger trains, the Field Railway was put to full use. At

times, six trains could be seen in motion around the field. "There are not many preservation sites which can offer visitors action on that scale," commented the MRT's Simon Lomax.

The organisers were particularly pleased to see a return to service for Motor Rail 7522, one of the rare 8/12hp type – only one other is known to exist. The loco suffered a catastrophic engine failure some years ago – a major rebuild has seen a replacement engine converted to 'rail traction' configuration and installed along with a great deal of other work.

The Trust is now planning its Steam Gala on 19th-20th September. Simon said that negotiations are underway for a visit from a "new to Apedale" steam loco and an announcement will be made in due course.

Meanwhile the build phase of the Trust's new museum is complete and

members are now undertaking the decorating and fitting out. "Painting the walls has been compared to the Forth Bridge – but it's beginning to come together," Simon said. "We are still hoping to achieve public access, likely on a limited basis, in 2026."

The Trust is still working hard to find the remaining £10,000 needed to fully fund the project; "A drop in the ocean of a £500k project, but nonetheless a gap which needs to be closed – If any *NGW* readers feel able to assist, the Trust would be very pleased to hear from you!"

Details of the project and running dates for the Apedale line are on the website, www.avlr.org.uk or social media.

Photos: Simon Lomax/MRT





■ Not a Royal Train, a Royal Tram... Douglas Bay Horse Tramway car 18, dating from 1883, and its horse 'Bobby' made a short journey on 14th July with a very special passenger, King Charles III. The King met tramway staff and horses and unveiled a commemorative plaque at the depot celebrating the tramway's 150th anniversary. *Photo: David Lloyd-Jones*

Annie proves a big attraction

The Groudle Glen Railway's Richard Booth looked justifiably pleased with himself on 28th June (right) as the Bagnall-inspired 0-4-2ST 'Annie', which he began building for the GGR in 1995, returned to service on the line.

As described in *NGW* 203, the loco had been withdrawn in 2022, starting what proved to be a more extensive overhaul than planned at John Fowler & Co.

The company even delivered the rebuilt Annie in style, hauled from the works in Cumbria by Fowler road locomotive 'Talisman', including taking the car ferry to the island.

Before arriving at the GGR the combination paused in Laxey, in front of the garage in which Richard started the build of Annie more than 30 years ago.



■ Isle of Man Steam Railway Beyer, Peacock 2-4-0Ts no 5 'Monna' and no 6 'Peveril', built in 1874 and 1875 respectively, have joined no 1 'Sutherland' and the recently cosmetically restored no 9 'Douglas' in the railway's Port Erin museum. *David Lloyd-Jones*, who took the photo, told *NGW* that the move was made ahead of the Manx Heritage Transport Festival at the end of July but it is possible that the two locomotives may stay on display for a longer period.



Wagons roll again

The Great Laxey Mine Railway has completed a refurbishment project on wagons used by the line since it opened.

When the volunteer-run 19-inch gauge line commenced running in 2004 it quickly became clear that a fleet of wagons would be required. The local authority for the village, Laxey & Lonan Commissioners, had invested in six replica ore wagons as a millennium project, these used for flower displays around the village. The railway made a successful request to employ them on the line, the wheels and axles being made good for free running.

Basic but useful

While basic in their construction the wagons were based on originals used in the Laxey mines a century ago, and were much appreciated by the volunteers as an alternative to using wheelbarrows. "They gave very good service in winter hauling ballast and other materials as the track was extended and refurbished, but by 2022 they'd certainly seen better days," GLMR Chairman Alasdair Campbell told *NGW*.

"One of our younger volunteers, Paul Marshall, who has been with us from a schoolboy and is now employed in the Douglas workshops of the Isle of Man Steam Railway, came up with a plan to refurbish the wheels and frames and build new bodies closely resembling the originals. Meanwhile I was volunteered to raise the required funding for this project."

Donations came in from individuals, the Laxey and Lonan Heritage Trust and the Alan Chinnery Trust, enabling Paul to commence the refurbishment in 2022, guided by well-renowned local welder and fabricator Billy Scott.

An issue with the cylinders of the line's locomotive 'Bee' diverted Paul's attention for a while. But he was able to return to the wagons and all four have been completed.

"The project has been extremely worthwhile for the GLMR and for Paul as his fabrication skills learned during it have helped in his confidence in his abilities," Alasdair added.

The wagons will enable the GLMR to run demonstration ore trains at the Manx Heritage Transport Festival held at the end of July.



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Sign of the times at Fintown

Bigger and better signs publicising the Fintown Railway have been put in place alongside the Ballybofey-Glenties road (*reports Hugh Dougherty*) in a bid to boost passenger numbers on the 3ft gauge line, which runs a genuine CDR railcar along a restored section of the former Glenties branch of the County Donegal Railways.

The committee which runs the line hopes to lift numbers above the 6,000-plus passengers who enjoyed a trip over the line last year by making the attraction more visible. Further measures include an online booking system and more operating days between 1st June and 27th September.

A railway spokesperson said: "We've invested in our new signs to ensure that everyone knows we're here. We feel that we offer an ideal day out for railway enthusiasts, tourists and families alike."

Details of services are at <https://antraen.com>

Lincs cavalcade offers great horsepower

The Lincolnshire Coast Light Railway brought its two-day Narrow Gauge at Work event on 19th-20th June to a spectacular conclusion with a cavalcade of 11 locomotives coupled together.

Steam, petrol and diesel locos formed the procession, the entire stock of the Skegness line and all but one under power.

The event began on the Friday with an exclusive photo charter – participants from around Britain and The Netherlands were offered combinations of locos and rolling stock in some cases not seen since the mid-1950s or even before.

On the Saturday the public was able to join in, riding passenger trains interspersed with goods workings, again featuring unusual combinations of rolling stock.

An additional attraction at Friday's event was a reminder of how many farm railways in Lincolnshire operated a century ago, with a wagon once used on the Nocton Estates Light Railway (which ran for 23 miles across the Fens from Nocton to the outskirts of Bardney) pulled by 'Trixie', a horse trained to operate on light railways, visiting from the private Silverleaf Poplar Railway at Old Leake, near Boston.

A rake of tipper wagons – once a familiar site on construction sites and brick pits around the county a century ago, was



also loaned by the Old Leake line, enabling the LCLR Peckett 0-6-0ST 'Jurassic' to recreate how it had worked such trains until 1955 at the Southam (Warks) quarries of Rugby Portland Cement.

Other highlights included former Nocton Estates Light Railway Simplex diesel of 1920, now named 'Nocton', making its first foray along the line fitted with a replica wooden cab recreating its 1930s appearance and the first journey on a passenger train of Simplex 8905, rebuilt by its owner from a rolling chassis and fitted

with an electric starter and air brakes.

Also making its first journey was the petrol-powered Simplex loco from World War One recently acquired from the Imperial War Museum and combinations of former World War One rolling stock which once worked on the Nocton Estates Railway before acquisition for the building of the LCLR.

Whether multiple locomotives (above), or more traditional transport (below left) there was no shortage of horsepower at the LCLR's event.

Photos: Chris Bates and Dave Enefer/LCLR



Lincolnshire Coast line volunteer Matthew Forman-Clark, 22, had plenty of reason to look pleased on 29th June having become one of the youngest passed firemen on the line. Matt joined the LCLR as a volunteer on his 18th birthday and had already qualified as the line's youngest-ever diesel driver. Trainer Tim Drury led the congratulations. *Photo: LCLR*



Ffestiniog's unusual Gala proves extremely good

Faced with the challenge of replicating the huge success of its '200 Wheels on the Cob' event in 2025, the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway decided to channel the unusual for this year's June attraction, in the spirit of the much enjoyed 'Quirks & Curiosities' events of some years ago.

The Extreme Steam Extravaganza, held between 19th and 21st June put the accent on the unexpected, and despite the title included plenty of diesel action, the line's internal combustion locos getting their turn on the passenger services and sometimes double heading with steam traction.

The steam rosters were somewhat different to the norm too, varying from a superpower pairing of the recently entered into service South African Railways 2-8-2 'Kalahari' and new-build Lynton & Barnstaple Manning Wardle 2-6-2T 'Lyd' to a trio of quarry Hunsletts charging up the line together.

Even the rolling stock departed from typical. As well as the signature gravity trains, there were items of departmental stock that the average visitor never sees, and even a new attempt at Motor Rail, a bright orange Mini placed on a well wagon. All in all it was a great deal of fun, demonstrating just how much variety there is to be found on today's FF&WHR.



Top: Porthmadog Harbour station was the centrepiece of the event and hosted an eclectic selection of stock over the weekend, from main passenger locos to items of departmental freight stock.

Above: The railway became a railroad, with this Mini neatly fitting on the flatbed attached to a well wagon.

Below: Plenty of grunt on offer here, as South African Railways 2-8-2 'Kalahari' and Manning Wardle 2-6-2T 'Lyd' prepare to head up the Welsh Highland Railway.

Photos by Andrew Simmonds – see also Gallery pages.





Weather extremes pose major challenges to train services

The extremes of weather have caused challenges for railways around the globe in recent weeks.

NGW correspondent Michael Chapman arrived at the Train de l'Ardèche, previously known as the Chemin de Fer du Vivarais, in FRANCE on 7th July to discover that the usual steam services had been replaced by internal combustion, due he was told to the extremely hot weather.

Diesel-electric loco T66, built in 1950, worked services on both days that Michael visited what he described as "an incredible railway with scenery more spectacular than the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway".

Meanwhile the monsoon season arrived with a vengeance on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway in INDIA, incessant torrential rains in early July resulting in widespread disruption around the Darjeeling area.

Boulders and mud blocked the DHR tracks in several places at Sonada and

Pagla Jhora. A week later the service between New Jalpaiguri and Kurseong was still suspended whilst repair work continued, although train services on the section between Kurseong and Darjeeling continued as normal.

The Darjeeling has long suffered from the damage resulting from monsoon rains and the fact that its 55-mile route traverses a heavily mountainous part of the region – previous incidences have seen major sections of line wiped out by rock falls and services disrupted for in some cases more than a year.

Better news emerged from TAIWAN, a major and potentially destructive typhoon passing over the Far East country in early July. The Alishan Forest Railway, which took nine years to fully reopen after typhoons in 2009 and 2015, suffered only some fallen trees on this occasion which a spokesman said were quickly cleared and train services resumed.

■ Mike Massee's visit to the Darjeeling line described in the feature starting on page 36, in which he stated the line was fully open, took place before the monsoons.

Above left: Hot weather resulted in bo-bo diesel-electric loco T66 maintaining services on the former Vivarais line on 7th July.

Above: The route of the line is spectacular, even behind diesel-electric traction.

Photos: Michael Chapman

Below left: This slip near the DHR's Tindharia works was among a number of incidents that blocked the line and suspended services.

Photo: Shourya Basu/DHRS

Car driver on the wrong track

With the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway running alongside or on roads for much of its route, collisions with cars are not that rare, but one of the latest has gone viral on social media.

A train proceeding through the outskirts of Darjeeling brushed against the side of a Mahindra car, which had been parked too close to the rail track. The damage in the slow-speed incident was confined to a mild dent and scratches on the car's front passenger door.

Remarkably, however, the car owner then launched into an argument with the loco driver, claiming that the train had been travelling "on the wrong side"... a passer-by filmed the argument and posted it to social media, where it was rapidly shared widely.

Authorities did not see the joke. They decided the car had been dangerously and negligently parked, seized the vehicle and charged the driver.



■ **NGW reader Nick Wise** was in Wernigerode, GERMANY at just the right time on 14th June to catch the final Harz trains on the town's famed level crossing before the route was temporarily closed to allow the replacement of the crossing. DR class 2-10-2T 99 7245-6 headed the 09:55 departure from Wernigerode to the Brocken, seen departing Wernigerode Westerntor station.

Later the final train of the day, arriving in Wernigerode at 8pm, substituted its usual diesel traction for 99 7247-2, becoming the last passenger service on the line before the closure. As the picture at right shows the road crossing had already been closed for several days, allowing the tarmac around the rails to be dug up and exposing the wooden sleepers.



Seven strong Preßnitztalbahn

The German Whit Holiday weekend of 23rd-25th May saw the annual Steam Traction Weekend of the 750mm gauge Preßnitztalbahn (Pressnitz Valley Museum Railway) in the Ore mountains of Saxony (reports **Dominic Emery**), seven locomotives providing an intensive service.

The line runs over 8km of the former 23km route from Wolkenstein to Johstadt, ending at the Saxony/Czech border. The single line now runs from Steinbach to the original terminus at Johstadt – or it would had the former GDR State not built a block of flats directly between the station buildings and loco shed as soon as the line was closed, then ripping the track up including its metal bridges.

Over the holiday weekend a three-train service was run employing new-build replica Saxony class I K 0-6-0T no 54 which is based on the line, the railway's own Saxony class IV K 0-4-4-0Ts nos 99 1594-3, 99 1568-7, 99 1542-2 (99 542) and 99 1590-1, plus 99 1585-1 visiting from the Schwarzbachbahn and Saxony class VI K 0-10-0T 99 1715-4 (99 715). This loco handled trains singly, all the others being double-headed.

Other attractions included a model railway exhibition in the line's storage shed and stands at various stations, along with a historic bus service connecting the Deutsche Bahn station

GERMANY

at Wolkenstein with Steinbach.

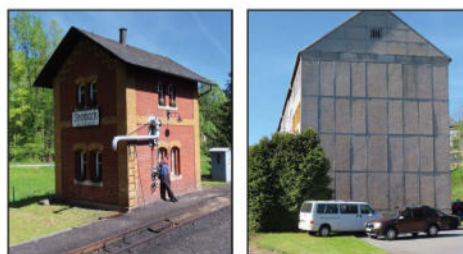
The rebuilt line runs through the pretty and tight river Preßnitz valley with the line getting very close to the river. At Steinbach is a 'Wasserhaus', a water tower built in the style of a house.

The museum plans to demolish the now empty and gutted block of flats at Johstadt in the next few months, enabling the station to be returned to its original use, the present platform being of a very temporary nature.

Below: The building at left may look like a house, but it's actually a water tower. Meanwhile the building at right is doomed: Demolition of this empty flat block will allow Johstadt station to be fully reopened.

Bottom: Super-power: Nos 99 1585-1 and 99 1590-1 on shed at Johstadt during the gala.

Photos: Dominic Emery



BRIEF LINES

New train for tourists

Rail authorities in **BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA** launched a new tourist service in early May on the metre-gauge line between Sarajevo and Vareš. The train consists of ex-DB V100 diesel loco 661-267 'Kennedy' and three passenger carriages that were donated to the line by Swedish Railways after the end of the civil war in 1995.

Romania to Forest of Dean?

The team rebuilding the Sibiu to Agnita Railway in **ROMANIA** has obtained Government approval for 0-8-0T locomotive 764.158, built by the Malaxa works in Bucharest in 1941, to be sent to the UK for full restoration at the Flour Mill Works in the Forest of Dean. Flour Mill owner Bill Parker is a long supporter of the Sibiu to Agnita project, his loco Manning Wardle 1877 spending several months working on the line in 2025.

Cash fear as line stays shut

The Britzer Parkeisenbahn in Berlin, **GERMANY** remained closed in mid-June, despite rail repairs on the 600mm gauge line's level crossings having been finished in time for the traditional season start at Easter. On one crossing three heavy metal plates protected the rails with the internal road stone work yet to be started. Rumours suggest the concession to run the line is yet to be awarded amid fears over the level of subsidy likely to be available to it.

Readers can send in news from overseas lines for inclusion on these pages – contact details are on page 3

100 up for the Furka

SWITZERLAND

On Friday 3rd July the preserved section of the Furka Oberalp Bahn celebrated one hundred years since the opening of the line from Brig via Andermatt to Disentis (*reports Adrian Garner*).

The celebrations on the metre-gauge line continued over the weekend with additional trains to the usual schedule. This required four locomotives in steam – nos 4 and 9 of the original railway (both HG2/3) and nos 704 and 708 (both HG4/4) which have been recovered and restored from the metre gauge Abt rack railway that ran from Dalat to Krongpha in Vietnam. All were built by Schweizerische Lokomotiv- und Maschinenfabrik, Winterthur, the former around 1913 and the latter locomotives for Vietnam in 1924 and 1930 respectively.

For the event the carriage sheds at the end of the station at Realp were cleared allowing seating for a barbeque as well as displays relating to the railway's history and stands selling models by both Bemo and LGB. Outside on display were the railway's internal combustion vehicles, loco no 6 'Weisshorn' built for the Visp Zermatt railway, the line's operational steam snowplough and a 7¼-inch gauge miniature railway.

The Matterhorn Gotthard now operates the electrified line between Brig and Disentis. The preserved section, climbing over the Furka pass reaching a maximum height of 6700ft, is bypassed by a tunnel allowing all-year operation of train services.

Steam among the electric

The MGBahn company joined the celebrations by allowing a limited steam operation between Andermatt and Realp. MGBahn Historic also provided legendary electric locomotive He 4/4 1 (No.36) for additional special trains from Disentis. This class of locomotive had been the mainstay of operations following electrification. The Matterhorn Gotthard company earned much praise for fitting in these services between normal operations given the line is single track with passing loops at stations.

The weather was brilliantly clear and sunny allowing those lucky enough to have booked a seat on the packed trains to see the sadly receding glacier on their two-hour steam hauled journey over the pass from Realp to Oberwald.

Above left: On 4th July F.O. no 9 pulls out of Andermatt with a packed train.

Left: On the previous day HGe 4/4 1, no 36, descends one of the loops to reach Andermatt from Disentis.

All photos by Adrian Garner



Above: Formerly based in Vietnam, no 704 heads out the first train from Realp on 5th July during the Furka centenary celebration.

Below: Another Vietnam veteran, no 708 hauls F.O. no 6 'Weisshorn' onto the turntable at the depot in Realp before going on display at Realp station.



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A Day in the Life...

David Rowbotham brings our three-part celebration of 75 years since the Tallyllyn Railway launched preservation right up to date, describing one of the many unsung roles on today's railway.

Being a Blockman on today's Tallyllyn Railway is probably the best traffic duty you can volunteer for if early mornings are not your thing – you don't have locos to prepare or carriages to clean, simply turn up in time for the first train of the day.

Admittedly some Blockman duties do require arrival at your designated Blockpost before services commence, especially at Tywyn Pendre where each day's service trains are assembled in the morning and put back in their sheds at the end of the day and where many engineering trains start and terminate their journeys. But with most Blockman duties it's usually fine to travel on the first public train of the day and return back down the valley on the last service train.

I arrive in the Control Office at Tywyn Wharf station just after 10am; in plenty of time to sign in, collect the Blockpost keys, converse with the Controller for the day to find out if anything out of the ordinary might be happening up the line, and to get a cuppa from the Wharf Cafe.

On this particular day I am rostered at Quarry Siding, 5.3 miles up the line between Dolgoch Falls and Abergynolwyn, with a scheduled four up trains and four down trains to deal with. The public train service requires a Blockman at every post where a crossing is scheduled to take place – any loops not requiring a crossing on the day can be switched out, with the train crew taking responsibility for obtaining a token for the next section of the line.

On this occasion no crossings are required on this timetable and the engineers are unlikely to be coming this far up the line today, but the presence of additional Blockmen to man locations where crossings will not take place can save several minutes on the overall journey times, with tokens being exchanged on the move rather than trains having to stop. With intermediate request stop stations on the Tallyllyn being as popular as ever, manning additional Blockposts helps recover lost time and cross trains to schedule, and also

"Simply turn up in time for the first train of the day..."

Above: A typical scene on today's Tallyllyn Railway as 'The Railway' Adventurer' eases its way towards David's Blockpost.

Below: Not lonely, just peaceful – David settled in on duty at the Quarry Siding Blockpost.

All photos by the author

helps accommodate unscheduled engineering train operations.

A compartment on the first train, next to the guards compartment, is often reserved for travelling staff. This gives us a chance to catch up with fellow volunteers who we may not have seen for some time and is also convenient for the guard to unlock the door to let the staff out at their various locations along the line.

Departure time arrives at 10.30am and we enjoy a leisurely trip up the line, hailing the Pendre Blockman as we steam by and later dropping off the Brynglas Blockman and then the Dolgoch Stationmaster en-route.

Quarry Siding has a halt, but it is situated at the opposite end of the loop to the Blockpost and is little more than a slightly raised mound of ballast. Rather than stop here twice, the train continues to the Blockpost where the guard releases me from my compartment, while the loco fireman unlocks the post to report in to Control, to relinquish the token for the section from Brynglas and to collect the token and permission to continue onwards to Abergynolwyn.

Working environment

I watch the departing train head off up the line and take a look around. Quarry Siding Blockpost is really little more than a glorified garden shed, but is a very pleasant location in which to spend a day out in the valley of the Afon Fathew. There is a stud-and-bar lever frame which once served at Watlington on the Great Eastern Railway – it operates the two points for the loops and that for the siding which leads towards 'The Guest House', a storage facility for items of plant and equipment used by the track and outdoor gangs and



named after a former volunteer whose legacy financed its construction.

A track diagram hangs above the lever frame, indicating which levers operate which points and their facing point locks. To the right of the lever frame are two tables carrying the Electric Token machines, connected to similar devices at the preceding and following sections, Brynglas and Abergynolwyn. I note that an indicator on the Brynglas machine shows 'Line Normal' while that for Abergynolwyn indicates that there is a 'Train Going To', all is as expected.

At present the Blockpost is still switched out, so now is a good time to take the stop boards out to its approaches. These are painted red with the wording 'STOP UNTIL CALLED FORWARD' and function as the stop signals at which an approaching train must wait until the Blockman authorises movement beyond the board, using either a yellow or a green flag. The green flag indicates to the loco driver that the Blockman is in possession of the token for the next section and that the driver has permission to proceed beyond the station limits upon exchange of tokens. A yellow one indicates that the subsequent section is not available and that they must stop the train within station limits.

I walk back down the line with the Up stop board, inspecting the loop, point rodding and general environment for anything out of the ordinary which might need attention, checking that the gates are closed over the occupation crossing, past the halt and the log store of the outdoor gang tree fellers, then the old platelayer's hut which was efficiently created many years before the preservation era using a redundant saddle tank from the loco 'Tal-y-llyn', until I arrive at the U Board which shows that the Blockpost is Unmanned unless the 'STOP' is present.

The Down stop board is located beyond the Blockpost, alongside the line towards Abergynolwyn, beyond the end of the loop over a delightfully built rarely observed cattle creep, past the Woo Loo – an environmentally friendly compost toilet discretely sited for the comfort of Blockmen and a home for wayward spiders – and finally a stock of new and used railway sleepers and fence posts.

Returning to the Blockpost, above the tables with the block instruments there are two phones, dedicated to the Blockposts either side of Quarry Siding, independent of the internal phone system for communication with the rest of the railway network. Also above here is a Train Approach Indicator, conveniently waking up the Blockman when a train approaches.



To the right of the token instruments is a tall old-fashioned writing desk, upon which is a dial telephone used to report train times to Control and a Train Register book, in which times of the various token requests and train descriptions and movements are recorded. On the opposite wall is the noticeboard which will display information pertinent to the Blockpost, including the Weekly Notice of train services and any Special Traffic Notices advising of train services being provided in addition to the normal scheduled timetabled trains.

Ringing the bells

Anyway, the stop boards are out, so it is time to communicate with the posts at Brynglas and Abergynolwyn and down to Control to inform them that I am now open for business. First is the 'Opening Blockpost' bell code 5-5-5 to each adjacent post, which is acknowledged and repeated back to me and recorded in the Train Register with the time sent.

A quick phone call to Control at Wharf confirms all is well, but that the next up train is running a little late due to the late arrival of a coach party at Wharf. This is followed by bell code 2-1 from Abergynolwyn, confirming that the Up train which I travelled upon earlier has now arrived at the end of the section, the indicator on the token instrument reverts to 'Line Normal' and I can assume the train will soon be heading off to Nant Gwernol. The 'Out of Section' time is recorded in the Train Register and I can sit back and wait until I receive a bell code offering me the Up train from Brynglas and requesting a release for the Blockman there to remove a token for the approaching train.

Eventually 3-1 rings out from Brynglas on the bells – I'm being offered Train 517, a 'Railway Adventurer' service which runs on certain Tuesdays through this time of

the year. I return the bell code, holding the last bell in order to give the Brynglas Blockman a release on his token instrument to take out a token for the section, and the indicator changes to 'Train Coming From'. The interlocking ensures only one token can be out of the machine at any time, thus protecting the train in section carrying the token.

A little while later I receive two dings on the Brynglas bell, telling me that the train has entered section, it should be with me in about 15 minutes from now. I reply in like to acknowledge the message and note the time in the Train Register.

On a still day such as today, you »

Above: Equipment in Quarry Siding Blockpost. Above the two token machines are the phones to the two posts either side of this one.

Below: The lever frame controlling the points with the Blockpost diagram above it.





can hear the whistles of the loco as it makes its way along the valley. A long blast heralds its approach to Dolgoch, three minutes down the line. Now is the time to request a token release from Abergynolwyn – I bell 1 to call attention to the Blockman there and then send 3-1 to request a release of a token for an Ordinary Passenger Train. He duly responds and I soon have a token for the next section in my hand, the token instrument indicator showing ‘Train Going To’.

This train will spend around five minutes at Dolgoch with the loco taking water and some of the passengers taking a break of journey to visit the nearby waterfalls.

A short blast tells the guard that the crew are ready to depart. He blows on his trusty Acme whistle and flags their departure. Just beyond the Dolgoch water column there is a track sensor which is triggered, setting off the Train Approach Alarm in Quarry Siding Blockpost.

With token in hand, I pick up the green flag and walk down along the line towards the sighting spot towards the far end of The Guest House. The approaching train whistles as it sees the stop board and comes into sight around the bend in the distance. I wave the green flag from side to side above my head, until the loco acknowledges the flag which is then furled and I walk back to the post.

I am sometimes asked why we do this rather than exchange the token at an earlier opportunity at the occupation crossing end of the loop. I return to the post in case we have a last moment call or emergency six bells (basically an instruction to immediately stop everything!) and so that I can give the ‘into section’ bell code 2 in a timely fashion.

The token is exchanged with the fireman on the footplate as they steam past. I observe the train as it goes by, checking for door handles in the correct position, secure brake pipe hoses, a red tail lamp and for any passengers who may be in distress.

As soon as the train has rattled by I give two dings on the token instrument to Abergynolwyn, return the token from the loco crew to the correct instrument, send the bell code 2-1 (out of section) to Brynglas, ring the train passing time down to Control at Wharf, then enter the times into the Train Register. Job done now, until I get the out of section 2-1 bell code from Abergynolwyn which will be in around eight minutes.

This is pretty much the same process for the next two Up trains and for the first three Down trains. This and the next Up train will cross trains at Abergynolwyn, so straight after the 2-1 out of section bell code I get a request for a release for a down train

“A token exchange a little slower than usual avoids any beverage spillages...”

Above left and above: The U tells the locomotive driver that the Blockpost, visible in the distance behind the essential facilities, is unmanned – once a stop board is in place the driver will expect instructions from a Blockman.

Below: The small occupation crossing needs keeping an eye on, often to redirect tourists who have ignored the signs at the junction with the main road.

towards me from Abergynolwyn.

If this happens straight away, I expect the Blockman there to have a problem getting his release for the down starter signal, designated A8. When a train arrives at Abergynolwyn signals need to be returned to danger and the points set and locked for the Down train, or the interlocking on the frame will prevent a release. It is a sharp reminder not to try and do things in a hurry, but to take the time to do it safely and correctly!

More haste less speed

As mentioned earlier, this Up train is running a little late, so the pressure is on to get the Down train away as soon as the Up train has crossed it. Almost immediately I receive a phone call from Abergynolwyn admitting they’d not got a release for the Down train departure signal. Ah well, this is something I’m sure all Tallyllyn Blockmen will have done on at least one occasion. Time for them to put all the levers back to normal up at Abergynolwyn and start again.

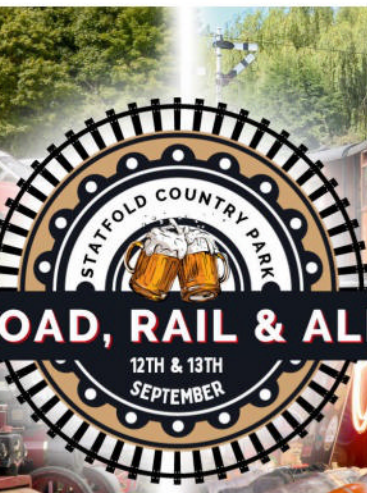
This time a successful release is obtained and I soon receive two bells from Abergynolwyn telling me that the down train is on its way to me.

As I’ve outlined, the provisions at Quarry Siding are pretty minimal and food and drinks-wise you are required to be self dependent. Perhaps the best Blockpost in this respect is Abergynolwyn, where there is a cafe with a respectable selection of both hot food and drinks available and a modern toilet block with hot and cold water on tap. Abergynolwyn is also a full-on Blockpost with colour light signals and points fully interlocked with the block instruments, all operated from a warm building with only a brief need to step outside if it is raining, to exchange tokens with the train crew at the bottom of the Blockpost steps. Luxury!

All is not lost here at Quarry Siding, however, and with the assistance of friendly train crews, a guard can be messaged to order hot »










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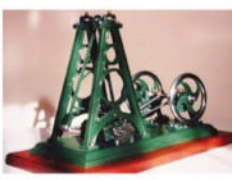
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food and drinks from Abergynolwyn cafe, to be handed over after the token exchange with the footplate crew as the train passes by and indeed this is the case today. A piping hot Coffee Mocha and a generous slice of very nice toffee sponge cake is handed over by the guard as they roll by, after an earlier request that the footplate crew run through for the token exchange a little slower than usual to avoid any beverage spillages!

On the wrong road

Shortly after the train has passed the peace is disturbed by the arrival of a private car at the occupation crossing at the far end of Quarry Siding loop. Time to take a walk down there to find out their intentions, to explain that the vehicle turnaround space over the crossing is not a car park and instead give them directions to the public car park further along the main road below Dolgoch station and the footpath to the waterfalls. On this occasion yet another tourist has ignored the signs at the bottom of the drive informing them that there is no road access to Dolgoch Falls at this point. Google Maps still displays this as the closest road access to the Falls,

despite numerous requests to sort out its map routing, so I suspect the road signs will continue to be ignored for some time to come.

Back to the Blockpost now as the earlier Down train will soon be crossing with the next Up train at Brynglas and I'll be receiving Out of Section 2-1, then the next token release for a passenger train request 3-1 and have an Up train heading into section towards me once again, two bells – you soon get to know the different bell codes for the various communications between Blockposts.

During this low-season timetable the last train off Wharf is 14.10, scheduled to arrive with me a little before 15.00. Once I get the 'Into Section' two-bell code from Brynglas, it is soon followed by a call to attention and the bell code 7-5-5, indicating that the Brynglas Blockpost is closing.

Once this train has exchanged tokens at Quarry Siding there is more than an hour before it will return as the last Down train and provide my transport back down to Tywyn Wharf. This is the chance to sweep out and mop the floor, keeping it tidy for the next occupant. Cleaning the



Above left: "Where is that train?" On another occasion David's trainee displays the flag instructing the driver of the as-yet invisible train. While black on the back, the flag is either green or yellow on the front. This prevents sending erroneous signals to the train crew behind him.

Above: "Ah there it is..." 'Tom Rolt' and its train approach the Blockpost at Quarry Siding.

Below: The aim achieved: having traversed the Blockpost and received the token for the next section, the train continues on its way up the valley to Abergynolwyn.

Blockpost windows and Brasso'ing the brightwork on the token instruments helps to while away the time until the last down train. Once that train has departed Abergynolwyn for Nant Gwernol I will send a 'call attention' ding to Abergynolwyn and once this is acknowledged I will sent 7-5-5 and after receiving this code back I will switch off the Blockpost switch, effectively switching the token instruments over to 'remote' – this allows Blockposts at either end of the sections to withdraw a token by obtaining a remote release from the Blockpost without the need for a Blockman to be present.

I can now take a stroll and collect the Up and Down direction stop boards from their trackside stands and hang them up on their rack in the Blockpost. A token has been taken at Abergynolwyn for the Down train and the Train Approach Indicator alerts me that it should be arriving outside my post in the next five minutes.

Train to the coast

As the train rolls to a halt I ring down to Control one last time to report the arrival time and to request a token for the journey down to Brynglas. I turn on the Blockpost switch, return the Abergynolwyn token and withdraw a Brynglas token, turn off the switch once more, lock the door, hand the token to the fireman on the footplate and join the guard in their compartment for the journey back to Tywyn Wharf.

Job done, it's time to discuss the day's proceedings with the guard. There's always some incident or episode to review, even on the quietest of days so the journey soon passes and the day is over for this Blockman, leaving the guard and footplate crew to dispose of their train back at Pendre. Maybe I'll see them in a local hostelry later in the evening. **NGW**



Heat is on in high summer...

A quieter month for special events but our photographers still braved the heatwaves to capture some superb images of the latest goings on...



Above: A photo charter organised by regular *NGW* contributor Joey Evans at the Richmond Light Railway in Kent on 12th June saw a pair of green engines strutting their stuff for the cameras, Arn-Jung 0-4-0 'Jenny' joined by Bagnall 0-4-0ST 'Pixie'.

The Model T Ford truck certainly added an extra element to the photos but it did remind your editor of the thousands of models produced by the Lledo company which flooded the model market over the years – Andrew has many surplus ones in the Cloverlands Model Car Museum that he chairs (www.cloverlands.org) and he can't get rid of them!

Photos: Steve Town





Above: We could not resist using just one more picture from the photo charter on the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, attended by *Mike Massee* and reported on in this issue. Darj signalling staff uniforms are quite relaxed it seems...

Above right and Below: *Matt Ditch* captured rather more complex signalling at the South Tynedale Railway's Gala on 5th July. Visible in the window awaiting departure is the star of the show, the Stafford Narrow Gauge Trust's Hunslet 0-4-2ST 'Howard'. Over the first weekend the loco looked impressive in its new surroundings, before running into problems and having to be stood down for the second weekend.





Above: As reported on page 13, the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highlands Railways' 'Extrreme Steam Extravangaza' on 19th-21st June was, well different. Out on the line, for example, you could choose between three little maids, Hunslets 'Felinheli', 'Lilla' and 'Britomart' with their mixed train, or 'Prince' and 'Upnor Castle' having a face to face argument over the merits of steam versus internal combustion traction...

Below: Choose your weapon – a very mixed line-up of potential superpower at Porthmadog during the FF&WHR Extreme Steam Extravaganza.

All photos: Andrew Simmonds



Overleaf: "Cheer up chaps, it's supposed to be fun!" But as the facial expression of FF&WHR General Manager Paul Lewin suggests, and your editor can testify, when you are crewing a cabless loco and the rain arrives, fun is not necessarily the word...

Photo: Andrew Simmonds

NARROW GAUGE WORLD





Narrowing the view...

James Waite continues his study of narrow-gauge locos built for miniature track widths, slimming down to a foot or less...



"He is reputed once to have steamed it in his living room while his wife was away..."



Possibly the earliest commercially-run 12¼-gauge line was the Littlehampton Miniature Railway which was built in the 1940s; today it operates 2-6-2T 'Christopher', the third loco built by the Exmoor Steam Railway (191/1991). The gauge has become more popular since John, later Ivan, Ellerton adopted it, initially for his abortive scheme to resurrect a part of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, and later for his shortlived Réseau Guerlédan, a 5km line which opened in 1978 along a highly scenic and steeply-graded section of the old SNCF metre gauge Réseau Breton between Mûr-de-Bretagne and Caurel in the French département then named Côtes-du-Nord. Intriguingly he inherited the Réseau Breton's concession because its track had been left in situ at level crossings and so was not designated as completely abandoned.

David Curwen and John Milner respectively built for Ivan half-scale models of the Lynton & Barnstaple's 2-6-2T 'Yeo' and a Darjeeling Himalayan 0-4-0ST B class 0-4-0ST named 'Sherpa' in 1978, and of the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway's 'Beddgelert' and a Leek & Manifold 2-6-4T named 'Elaine' in 1979. Yeo and Sherpa (under different names) worked the Guerlédan trains, and Beddgelert and Elaine would have joined them had the line not closed after two seasons. All except Sherpa accommodated the driver on their footplates, albeit with oversized cabs, and perhaps represented a halfway house towards being non-miniatures.

Ivan bought the 15in gauge Fairbourne Railway in 1984 and regauged it to 12¼ inches in late 1985 and early 1986. In its new form the line, with its well-built and comfortable coaches brought over from Brittany, influenced the Stirlands' decision to adopt the gauge

at Exmoor in 1989, and in 2001 to recommend it to Leopold de Rothschild, who was planning a line at Exbury Gardens in the New Forest.

Ivan's son Shôn recalls that the cab of Elaine was dangerously cramped, the main reason why his father rebuilt it as a somewhat crude model of the NWNGR's 'Russell' before it entered service. He also recalls that it and Beddgelert were temperamental during Ivan's time at Fairbourne, a shortcoming of many miniature locos put to commercial use unless they are really beefed up. Beddgelert was withdrawn in 2008 – it is currently being rebuilt while the railway raises funds for the work (bit.ly/4vbnbrnf).

In 1990 the Fairbourne workshops completed 2-6-2 no 24, styled after the last steam loco built for the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad, the legendary 2ft gauge line in Maine, USA. The new loco's proportions are so different that it's barely a miniature at all. Two years later it was converted to 15in and sold, and now lives at the Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway. Save for the Fairbourne machines Exmoor's 14 locos for the gauge can fairly be said to dominate the 12¼in scene today.

Early miniatures

The 10¼in gauge dates back much further, at least to the 1890s when the Holder family at Moor Green, Birmingham, built the Pitmaston Moor Green Railway which did much to popularise the gauge. Their first loco was an inside-cylinder 4-2-2 and was referred to as "the broad gauge model". A faded and indistinct photo shows that it was loosely based on Sir Daniel Gooch's magnificent 8ft singles which hauled Great Western Railway expresses until its 7ft¼in broad gauge was abolished in 1892, a matter of nostalgic regret throughout its system, not least in Birmingham even though the city last saw a broad gauge train as far back as 1869. At one eighth scale the gauge would have almost exactly equated to 10¼in and it's intriguing to think there may be a connection between it and Brunel's celebrated GWR creation.

For many years there was a degree of competition with the 9½in gauge, which translates more accurately as one fifth of the size of standard gauge and dates back even further; the Science Museum in London has a 9½in loco built by Philip Wolf in Vienna as long ago as 1843, and another built by T. H. Goodison in Dublin, likely in the 1850s.

One definite 10¼in highlight was the splendid, if short-lived, Surrey Border & Camberley Railway which opened in 1938, mostly using 4-6-2 Pacifics from the well-known builder



Heading: The Fairbourne Railway in June 1987, its second season as a 12¼-inch line. 'Beddgelert' emerges from the second tunnel, on a section of line since abandoned.

Upper left: 2-6-4T 'Elaine' in original Leek & Manifold form and 0-6-4ST Beddgelert in store at Fairbourne shed in August 1984. The railway was then still operating on the 15-inch gauge and 2-4-2 'Katie' (then running as 'Shôn') can be seen in the background.

Centre left: The attractive lines of Beddgelert, seen at Penrhyn Point in June 1987.

Lower left: NGW editor Andrew Charman in charge of the Fairbourne line's 'Sherpa' in 2021. Photo: Harry Billmore

Above: Kitson Garratt no 4012 at the Royal Victoria Railway on 6th August 2024.

Right: On the same day James pictured Roger Marsh's 1976 0-6-2T 'Trevithick' on shed.

Photos by the author unless stated.

H. C. S. Bullock who favoured 10¼in because it permitted more rugged engineering. Gooch's locos must have been a daily sight for Bullock when he was a child since his father was a GWR signalman at Box Signal Box in its broad gauge days. He was a life-long GWR enthusiast, and he was perhaps in advance of practice at Swindon. His Pacifics look uncannily like a proposal worked up there a few years later. They incorporate features such as outside Walschaerts gear and single slide bars, which only appeared on the GWR with the 1500 class 0-6-0PTs in 1949.

The Camberley line was hugely popular and in happier times might have become as enduring as the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, but it closed at the start of the Second World War and Barclays Bank promptly put in receivers to sell

the assets and recover the money it had loaned – hardly a brilliant contribution to public morale during the UK's war effort. Much of the route now lies beneath junction 4 of the M3 motorway and its extensive approach roads complex.

Off the books

The SB&CR also had two LMS-style 2-6-0+0-6-2 Garratts newly-built by Kitson & Co as works numbers 4012 and 4013, which it used as their running numbers. Kitson may seem a curious choice of builder, not least because the company's preferred articulated type was the Kitson Meyer, and anyway it was supposed to have ended loco construction under a deal brokered by the Locomotive Builders' Association to help the industry recover from the 1930s depression.

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The SB&CR's promoter was, however, a Kitson director. The Garratts weren't mentioned in the company's closing records, and their builders' plates were so miniscule that they were unlikely to be spotted by anyone except on close examination. Kitson mounted the carrying wheels on the bogie mainframes, resulting in a long fixed wheelbase. This became a cause of great problems in later years, though the locos coped well enough with the SB&CR's gentle curves.

The late Sir Thomas Salt was on a mission to promote 10¼in as a viable minimum gauge for use in agriculture and in 1953 he started to build the 1½-mile long Shillingstone Light Railway at his farm in Dorset. It was mostly diesel-worked, but he always wanted a steam loco. By 1963 SB&CR no 4012 was at Beyer,

Above: A steamy departure for the Garratt 'Norfolk Hero' on the Wells & Walsingham Railway, captured on film by Michael Chapman in 2014.

Below left: Sister loco 'Norfolk Heroine' is topped up for the next round trip at Wells in 2017. Photo: David Williams



Peacock's Gorton factory, surely the spiritual home of all Garratts! It had gone there for regauging to 15 inches, but the work wasn't carried out and instead Sir Thomas bought it.

To suit its new role it was rebuilt for him at Oswestry Works as a proper narrow gauge machine with a tall chimney and dome cover, and a full-sized cab with the coal space widened to match. He perhaps chose Oswestry because he was leading the efforts to preserve the Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway, and the former Cambrian works at Oswestry had been looking after the W&LLR's two locos since its closure. This GWR establishment naturally bestowed a copper cap upon the Garratt's smart new chimney!

Sir Thomas named his loco 'Jason', but it proved a disappointment since it took exception to Shillingstone's bendy track. It seldom ventured out, and after a peripatetic existence moved in 1999 to the Royal Victoria Railway at Netley, near Southampton, still carrying its Oswestry fully-lined crimson paint scheme.

Exalted company

The delightful Royal Victoria line was built in 1995-6 by Peter Bowers on a hillside close to Southampton Water. Peter named the Garratt 'Basil the Brigadier', and in 2009 sent it to Hunslet's factory where it was reboilered and fitted with pony trucks. Not many little locos, even long-lived ones, have spent time at four different mainline workshops! Sadly it still dislikes sharp curves and is currently being offered for sale. Its sister loco no 4013 has also led a wandering life since the closure of the

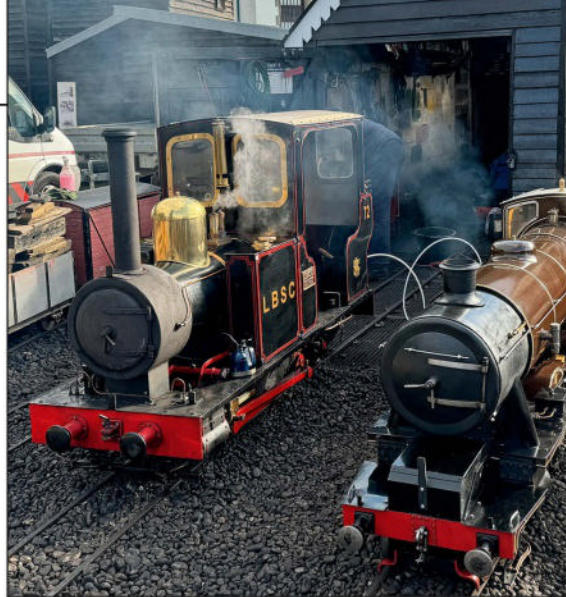
SB&CR, and now resides in Australia.

The Royal Victoria line is home to two other early 10¼in non-miniature steam locos, 0-6-2T 'Trevithick' supplied by Roger Marsh in 1976 and David Curwen's 2-6-0 'Isambard Kingdom Brunel' which was completed in the following year. They were both built for the former Age of Steam Park near Penzance. David's loco became so appreciated at Netley that shortly before he died he helped Peter build a duplicate at the Royal Victoria's own workshops. The new loco was unveiled to the public in 2017 as 'Sammy the Sargent' but today runs as 'G. J. Churchward'.

In Norfolk David King enjoyed a reputation as a creator of all sorts of steam-powered machinery. In 1972 he completed 10¼in 0-4-2T 'Edmund Hannay', named after a pioneer shipbuilder at Blyth. The loco was initially intended for his own enjoyment but in 1975 he sold it to Commander Roy Francis for use on the newly-constructed Wells Harbour Railway. Three years later he built 0-6-0T 'Pilgrim' for Commander Francis who was then building the Wells & Walsingham Light Railway on the trackbed of the old Great Eastern Wells-next-the-Sea branch. They are both curious-looking machines with two of their three axles behind the firebox.

Global leader

There are today several 10¼in gauge lines in the UK, a typical example being the Rudyard Lake Railway, opened in 1985 on the trackbed of the former standard gauge North Staffordshire Railway – it's now run by Adam and Alecks Jeffrey and relies



primarily on Exmoor-built locos for its motive power. But with a running distance of four miles the Wells & Walsingham remains the longest 10¼in line not only in the UK but the world.

A much more powerful loco was needed for the line, arriving in 1987 in the form of 'Norfolk Hero', a 2-6-0+0-6-2T Garratt built by Neil Simkins, and Pilgrim moved away. The Garratt must have provided great satisfaction, since a similar loco, 'Norfolk Heroine', was built for the line by Richard Colbey in 2010.

Edmund Hannay lived at Wells-next-the-Sea until 1995 when the harbour railway's owners decided to operate exclusively with diesels. It and Pilgrim moved around for many years but both now reside at the excellent Hastings Miniature Railway, based at Rock-a-Nore beach under the cliffs to the east of the Kent town. Sadly Pilgrim was set aside in 2024 in need of a new boiler. A few weeks later Melissa Harmony, who is very much involved in running the line, told me she was still suffering a sense of acute bereavement following the loss of her favourite loco.

The Hastings line was built in 1948 by Captain Howey, the creator of the RH&DR. Probably its first

Above and above left: Hastings Miniature Railway locos 'Edmund Hannay', built by David King in 1972, and 'Firefly' at Rock-a-Nore engine shed on 6th September 2024. Note how Edmund Hannay dwarfs the scale Brighton Atlantic loco standing next to it.

Below: 2-6-2T 'Naomi', built by the Exmoor Steam Railway in 2001, crosses the old timber trestle on the Exbury Gardens Railway on 21st March 2007. The trestle has since been demolished and the line diverted to a route over higher ground.

loco was his 1937-built model of the LMS 4-6-0 'Royal Scot'. It was doubtless safer there than at his home, where he is reputed once to have steamed it in his living room while his wife was away, with predictable and catastrophic consequences! It later moved on, and is currently stored at the Royal Victoria line, though many at Hastings have fond memories of it, stirred by the arrival of another Royal Scot there in 2022.

Battle for custody

Another former resident was 0-6-0 no 3007 'Firefly', rebuilt from a GWR-style pannier tank which Bullock built for his son Ken. Bullock died while building a loco for Howey, who promptly removed Firefly from his home, claiming he was owed money. Ken was still a child and must have been devastated. Happily he was reunited with it many years later after it moved to Kerr's Miniature Railway, run by Matthew Kerr at Arbroath.

Firefly now lives with most of Bullock's Pacifics at the Eastleigh Lakeside Miniature Railway near Southampton. This is part-owned by Matthew's grandson John, along with the Cleethorpes line and the 20in Scarborough North Bay Railway which is operated by four 1930s-built

Hudswell Clarke steam-outline internal combustion locos.

Rock-a-Nore in Hastings is the home of Europe's largest beach-launched fishing fleet, and the scene there is dominated by the distinctive tall and narrow wooden buildings constructed for the fishermen to dry their nets at a time when space on the beach was at a premium. These unique structures, known locally as net shops, are much appreciated and the entire district now enjoys protected status.

They can also be admired from the 5ft gauge East Hill funicular, once a water-balance line but now electrically-worked. The miniature railway is now also home to another 'Firefly', one of two 0-4-0ST+Ts built by Jack Brown in 1985 but which was seldom used before it arrived at Hastings in 2021. It's another pretty loco, but neither it nor Edmund Hannay seem to have captured Melissa's heart in quite the same way as her beloved Pilgrim... **NGW**

■ Apologies for an editing error in part 1 of this feature last month. Krauss and Krauss-Maffei produced 15 Martens-designed Pacifics, plus the three built by Krupp, not 50 as stated in the feature.



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Nam...



Keith Chester recalls his 1993 visit to a war-torn Far East nation that deeply marked his youth.



Above: Following decades of warfare, Vietnam was in the early 1990s still a very poor country with many young people and fewer middle-aged ones. Bamboo was widely used in construction.

Left: A hawker patiently waiting for custom and a steam locomotive: for many years a sight to be seen all over SE Asia. To the rear, 141-206 was the pilot at Hà Nội main station and thus kept cleaner than most locos.

Below: No 141-175 at the head of a Hai Phòng-bound freight on a very hot, sunny day. Stirring chimney exhausts were not a typical feature of Vietnamese steam locomotives.

James Waite's interesting article about Thái Nguyên steelworks in *NGW*202 prompted me to revisit, and then scan, my long unseen slides of a September 1993 visit to Nam, the name often used by the many GIs who fought and died in Vietnam.

It was a country that had formed the backdrop to my formative years. With a brutal war played out nightly on our TV screens and anti-war protest movements influencing popular music and culture, these years left a deep impression. Since the American defeat, I have read many books written by journalists, historians and novelists about the war, as well as watching some great films.

A few people, including BBC cameraman Nick Lera, photographed steam in South Vietnam during the war. However, it wasn't until the late 1980s that organised groups began visiting Vietnam and reports filtered back that there was still a little steam left in use in what we used to know as North Vietnam. It was, however, a long way to go...

Opportunity arises

In 1993, however, as I was planning a trip to Java's sugarcane railways, I realised that Jakarta and Hà Nội were not so far apart (and a visit to Hong Kong could also be squeezed in). From Vienna we began



to organise an individual trip to Vietnam. Though this was still the age of the fax and telex, transport, accommodation and visas were arranged surprisingly quickly, as was a photographic permit.

Sat near us on the plane from Hong Kong was a very muscular American of a certain age wearing a conspicuous green beret; another immediate reminder of the war was the bomb craters between the runways at Hà Nội airport, which became ever larger as our plane dropped from the sky.

Railway construction in Vietnam very much reflected the tortured history of the country in the 19th and 20th centuries. First to open in 1881 was the short metre gauge line from Sài Gòn to Chợ Lớn, which was extended to the port of Mỹ Tho in 1886. Built with French capital, it was initially worked by SACM 2-4-0Ts and 4-4-0Ts.

In the same year the last resistance to colonial rule was overcome and the entire country was integrated into French Indochina in 1887. In the north a 168km-long 600mm gauge military railway between Hà Nội and Đồng Đăng on the Chinese border was opened (and hastily regauged to 1000mm) in stages between 1891 and 1908.

Grand plans

Real progress, however, came with the governorship of the colony by Paul Doumer (1897–1902) and his grand plans for two arterial metre gauge railways, Sài Gòn–Hà Nội (1726km) and Hải Phòng–Hà Nội–Kunming in Yunnan (855km), collectively known as le Transindochinois; in the same period British imperialists in Burma were building the Mandalay–Lashio railway with the same intention of gaining access to Yunnan (the 'gateway to China').

Central to Doumer's scheme was a 2.3km (or 2.4km, sources vary) cantilever viaduct across the Red River at Hà Nội. Le pont Doumer was



Above: Mikado No 141-181 awaits attention inside the cavernous Gia Lâm workshops. Bombed out by the Americans, the complex was completely rebuilt by the Poles in the 1970s and 1980s.

Right: A D4H class Bo Bo, one of the more than 200 Soviet TU7 and TU7A type diesel hydraulic locos that Kambarka delivered to Vietnam, on the approach to Hà Nội with a passenger train from Hải Phòng.



inaugurated in 1903 and the difficult and expensive railway from Hải Phòng to Kunming was built between 1903 and 1910; this was known as the CF de l'Indochine et du Yunnan (CIY). However, the long coastal railway from Hà Nội to Sài Gòn (CF de l'Indochine) took much longer: whilst much of the work was completed by 1913, two key central

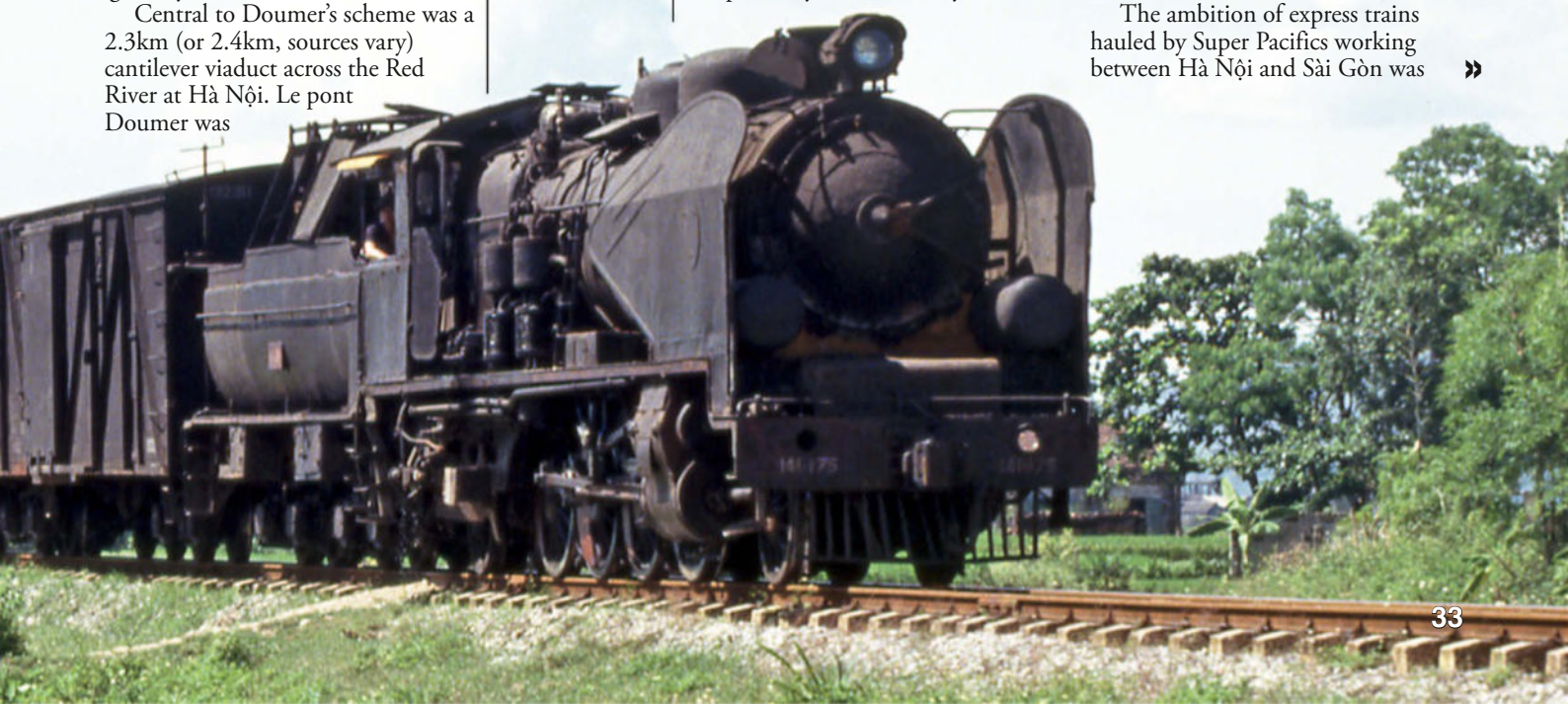
sections were only opened in 1927 and 1936 respectively.

In 1933 SACM delivered to the CFI ten 4-6-2s; six years later came the first of a planned 45 Chapelon-influenced Super Pacifics. Because of the war in Europe, construction was delayed and it was only in 1948 that the final one reached Vietnam; in the meantime, six had been sent to Africa.

The ambition of express trains hauled by Super Pacifics working between Hà Nội and Sài Gòn was

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All photos by the author, September 1993





very short lived for Vietnam was about to descend into chaos. The Japanese occupied the country between 1940 and 1945; there then followed a war of liberation that ended in 1954 with the French humiliation at Điện Biên Phủ.

The subsequent division of the country into Communist North Vietnam and pro-Western South Vietnam led to war between the two and then the ill-fated involvement of the Americans. Only with their chaotic withdrawal from Sài Gòn in April 1975 did a peace of sorts descend on the country.

War victim

The 35 years of almost continuous warfare had a disastrous effect on Vietnam's railways, with Vietcong sabotage and US bombing campaigns exacting a heavy toll, especially in the south. Le pont Doumer (now renamed Long Biên bridge) was

bombed repeatedly between 1967 and 1972, and finally rebuilt in 1973.

After the end of the war the reconstruction of the north-south railway from Hà Nội to Hồ Chí Minh City, the former Sài Gòn, was a priority and the first reunification train ran on 31st December 1976. The country's woes were far from over and it was only with the introduction of the Đổi Mới economic reforms in December 1986 that the fortunes of Vietnam began to revive.

In the early 1990s, however, there was still little sign of this. Hà Nội remained a faded city, bathing in the shabby chic of its French colonial and stark Communist-era architecture. Traffic on the state railways, Đường sắt Việt Nam (ĐSVN), was at a low ebb, and only a few steam loco turns remained in and around Hà Nội.

These were all in the hands of Chinese-built but decidedly French-looking Mikados. The type was

originally developed by SACM out of the 1939 Super Pacific and 35 were constructed for Indochina between 1948 and 1952. However, with the French grip on Vietnam faltering, five of the 2-8-2s were sent direct to Africa, and it is uncertain whether in fact all 30 of the remaining actually made the long journey from France to Southeast Asia.

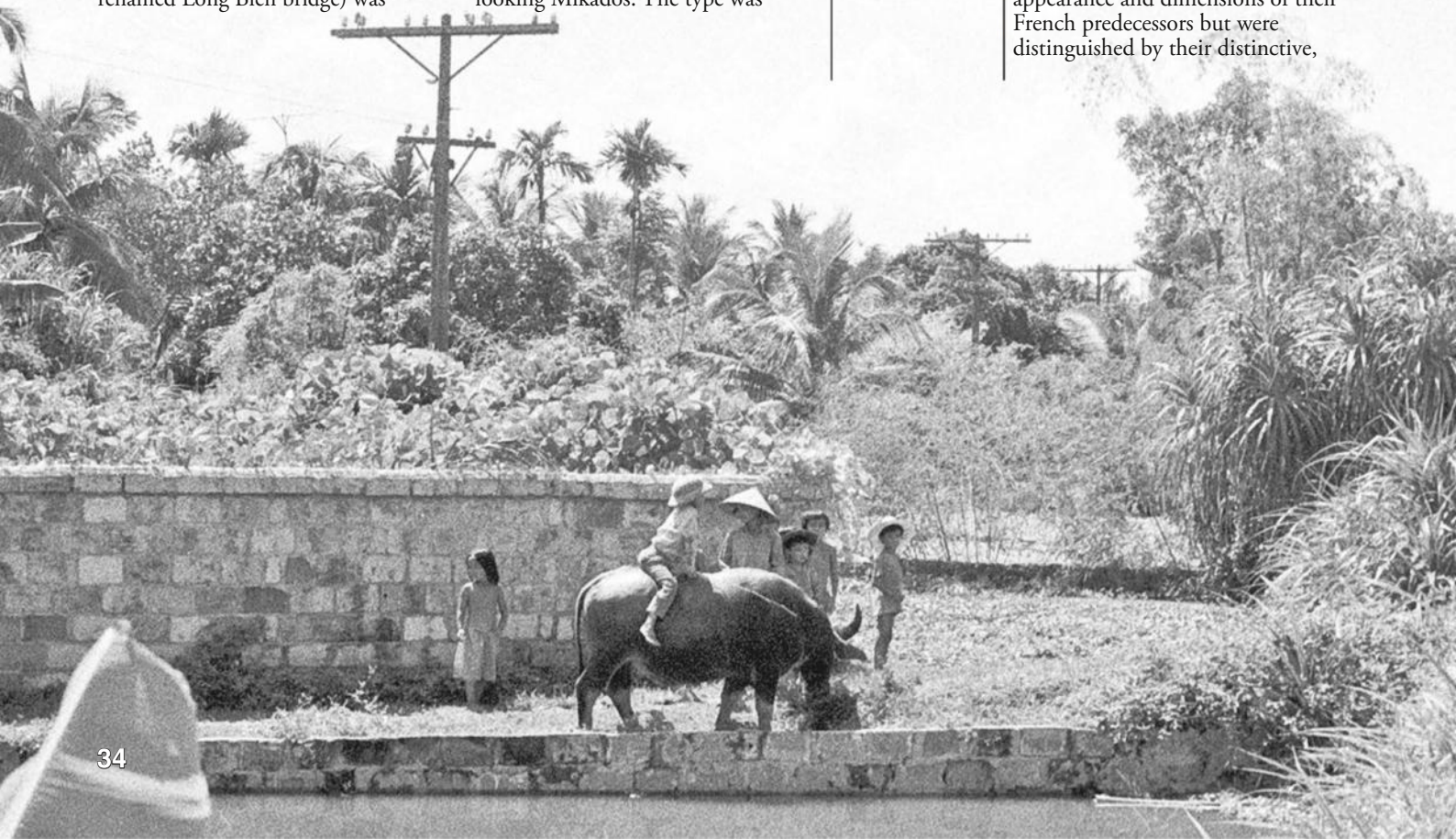
Additionally, a small number of the Super Pacifics and SACM Mikados were transferred to Cambodia, a French colony until 1953. We must also assume that some of the SACM 2-8-2s became war losses since fewer than half survived to be eventually renumbered 141-101-110 and 141-115 by the ĐSVN.

Local first

In 1964-65 two Mikados emerged from the Gia Lâm workshops. Billed as the first locomotives built in Vietnam, it is unclear whether they were indeed built new or assembled from parts of existing SACM engines. No 141-121 was named 'Nguyễn Văn Trỗi', a revolutionary hero executed in October 1964 for the attempted assassination of Robert McNamara, and 141-122 'Tự-Lực' (self-reliant).

The escalating war with the Americans meant that no more could be built in Vietnam itself but an order for 66 (67 believed built) was placed with the Tangshan locomotive factory in fraternal China. Delivered between 1965 and 1975, nos 141-151-216 were a modernised version of the SACM Mikados with a welded boiler and a slightly larger cab. They largely retained the appearance and dimensions of their French predecessors but were distinguished by their distinctive,

"The 35 years of almost continuous warfare had a disastrous effect on Vietnam's railways, with Vietcong sabotage and US bombing campaigns exacting a heavy toll..."



streamlined smoke deflectors, which the Vietnamese had first applied to the two Gia Lâm engines. The Chinese refer to them as class ZL (ZiLi). A few of those seen in the early 1990s also carried Tù-Lúc plates and it would appear that the Vietnamese attached this designation to the new 2-8-2s.

Apart from a single Super Pacific, an ex-Japanese 2-6-2T and a few SACM 2-8-2s all out of use or dumped, all the engines seen in September 1993 were Tangshan-built Mikados. About seven or eight were steamed on a daily basis. Some were employed on shunting duties at Hải Phòng and various locations in Hà Nội, including the dual gauge yard at Yên Viên: in the mid-1960s the Đông Đăng to Hà Nội line had been rebuilt to mixed 1000mm/1435mm gauge to facilitate the flow of Chinese aid to the beleaguered North Vietnamese.

Another turn kept a very clean specimen busy as the prestigious station pilot at Hà Nội's main station. 2-8-2s also worked freights and mixed trains on the main line south of Hà Nội to Nam Định, and east on the 102km-long line from the capital to the north's main port at Hải Phòng. But these trains were few and far between (the Hải Phòng freights were reported operating mostly at night) and ran irregularly.

Climate challenge

Unsurprisingly, they proved elusive. Catching one in decent light was even more difficult: rainy dark skies or harsh overhead sun seemed to be all that was on offer. And with both lines running through the flat Red River delta, little was demanded of the locos and their friendly crews.

Left: Women work on the track while no 141-158 shunts the extensive yards at Giáp Bát in the southern suburbs of Hà Nội.

Right: An enduring challenge of photography in Vietnam was the weather – pounded by a tropical downpour, no 141-211 heads a freight to Hải Phòng while a car takes an important party cadre back to Hà Nội.

Below right: The railway between Hà Nội and Hải Phòng ran for the most part directly along the main road connecting the capital and the main port in the north.

Below: Another view of 141-175 heading its Hải Phòng-bound freight, passing by some local people using rather more basic transport.



Despite the best efforts of our helpful guide (and the bribes he handed out locally), we did not see in our six days as much steam action as we would have hoped.

Somehow, however, that seemed

irrelevant. With the images of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and the sounds of Jimi Hendrix flying around in my head, simply being in Vietnam was sufficient: ĐSVN steam was the icing on the cake. **NGW**



Ambition fulfilled

Seeing the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway is a bucket-list item for many a narrow gauge fan. Following his return from a photo charter on the Indian line, US enthusiast *Mike Massee* can tick that one off.



On the week of 25th May, a (very) small photo charter was run by Trans India Rails, a new touring outfit that has been set up by Dan Holbrook and long-time Darjeeling Himalayan Railway collaborators Partha Roy and Anand Baid of the Cindrella Hotel in Siliguri.

This was the first time that the line's four-wheeled freight wagons had been used since German groups chartered them in 2016 – 2018. While we only had two wagons, word on the street is that the railway plans to restore two more this Autumn, to be used in future charters.

May is the pre-monsoon season in West Bengal and while it is starting to become quite humid and fairly warm on the plains (27deg C and 80 per cent humidity in Siliguri) the weather is excellent in the hills, around 22C to 24C each day, with mixed overcast, sun and clearing storm light and occasional rain overnight.

On the 24th of May I arrived in Bagdogra, bleary-eyed and exhausted after a series of flights from the United States and a 'Mr. Toad's Wild Ride' experience from the airport to the Cindrella Hotel in Siliguri, during which I was introduced for the first

"The constant parade of street life that flows by one's windows, often within mere inches..."

time to the wonders of Indian taxi driving and the constant parade of street life that flows by one's windows, often within mere inches!

The next day, we set out on the streets of Siliguri in two taxis. This day would be a warm-up, chasing the regularly scheduled 'up' diesel service train from Siliguri. As I write the entire Darjeeling line is open and there is one up train and one down train per day that traverses the entire 55-mile length.

Our first stop was Siliguri Town Station, in all of its decaying wonder. There are challenges in its location in



one of the poorest neighbourhoods of Siliguri, but money has been set aside for the rehabilitation. After getting a few shots of the broad gauge and a good cup of black tea from a tea stall on Siliguri Station Road, we walked to the bazaar along the DHR's tracks just up from the station. I am told that Indian Railways plans to evict the bazaar to accommodate double-track on the broad gauge, so this iconic market scene along the DHR tracks may soon become extinct.

When the up-train had passed through, we moved on via taxi, leapfrogging the train through Siliguri and Sukna, and into the hills and on to Rongtong. Along the way our taxi was rear-ended by another taxi and a heated argument ensued in the middle of the motorway, but soon we were on our way and did not miss much since the DHR operates at a pretty leisurely pace.

Hive of activity

At Tindharia workshops we found the facility clean and well lit, with the machines in the shop actually in use, a newer development. Freshly turned wheelsets for both locomotives and carriages were in evidence around the shop floor.

In the main shop, B-Class loco no 805 (23300/1925) was present and looking mostly complete. No 799 (23292/1925), which was recently rescued from being plinched in Delhi and brought in to the works by truck, was awaiting repairs and restoration including to its cab roof, damaged in the move.

In another corner of the shop, the bare chassis of 780 (3883/1892) was being operated on by three or four people. Outside, 806 'Queen of the Hills' (23303/1925) was parked but looking good. The Orenstein &

Heading: A scene typical of the Darjeeling line – working the photo charter, B-class 802 'Whistle Queen' pauses at Pagla-Jhor.

Below left: The DHR has what is possibly a unique diamond crossing with the 5ft 6in gauge Indian main line at Siliguri. No 802 makes the crossing with its short freight train.

Above right: To those in the know a positive DHR development is the increased activity now at Tindharia works, machines such as the wheel lathe being put to constant use.

Below: Regular DHR trains remain diesel-hauled – 6060 is one of the new locos built by NFR at New Bongaigaon and delivered to the line in 2025.

All photos by the author, May 2026



Koppel 0-4-0 'Baby Sivok', recently returned to steam, was on display near the works entrance with B-Class 792 (434912/1917).

In the regular loco shed in Tindharia, which is slowly being cleared of brush and restored for use, there sits the only remaining DHR A-Class locomotive chassis, in imminently restorable condition.

After our lunch at Tindharia Station, we drove back down to Siliguri, photographing the regular down train en route to the Cindrella.

The following morning found B-Class locomotive 802 'Whistle Queen' (23678/1927) at the Siliguri sheds being prepped for our run up the line with the freight wagons.

Just below a nondescript overpass on the Hill Cart Road sits one of the most unique sites in rail – the place where the 2ft gauge DHR crosses the 5ft 6in broad gauge, possibly the largest gauge disparity in a diamond crossing in the world. After the B-Class with its pint-sized freight came chugging across the broad

gauge, the track joined up with the Hill Cart Road, to which it would stay wedded for the rest of the 88km trip to Darjeeling.

After taking water at Sukna, we passed through the bazaar and on up into the hills, getting shots in the beautiful forest scenery as the railway zigzagged across the hill cart road.

Brief delay

Shortly before Rongtong, one of the freight wagons derailed. The crew smartly picked up a disused concrete sleeper, used it as a cribbing for a roughly 16ft length of spare rail found nearby and lifted up the derailed end of the wagon, putting it back on the track, much like we would do with our larger live-steam locomotives. The wagons weigh only about 2.2 tonnes empty.

At Rongtong we paused while waiting for the daily up-train to pass us. During this stop several pieces of the loco's Walschaerts valve gear were disassembled from the driver's side and re-installed. I could not discern »





what the problem had been, but no further issues occurred for the rest of the trip.

Into the dark

After Rongtong we got some beautiful shots at the curved Bridge 55 and the first switchback. We had been quite delayed by the earlier derailment and several other factors and it soon became obvious that we would not make Kurseong before dark, but the decision was made to press on so as not to affect the following day's schedule.

Continuing uphill, we got a few wonderful clearing storm-light photos and pressed on to Gayabari,

where we photographed activity around both switchbacks.

At Pagla Jora the light started to fail but I got a wonderful shot of the freight next to the waterfall. On we went into the fading light until we reached Mahanadi after dark. We paused for water and attracted a fairly good crowd as steam has now become a rarity on that part of the line.

The train pressed on in the darkness to Kurseong, and we met it at the station where they deposited the two wagons and backed into the sheds just down the street. The Kurseong station is quite well maintained and contains a café, an archive museum and more.

"Making repairs in that fashion that they do so well – with a hammer and basic blacksmith's tools in the open-air forge..."



The following morning we had one chance to photograph the train heading through the bazaar, and I got one excellent shot with headlight on.

We passed through Tung and Sonada, getting into the Himalayan foothill architecture now appearing alongside the Hill Cart Road and tracks. Climbing into a freight wagon, we avoided the massive traffic jam that exists between there and Darjeeling during the peak of the domestic tourist season.

There would be no easy shooting from the road from this point onwards, but there was fun in riding hobo-style in a freight wagon while shooting out the door, passing dead stopped traffic while people alighted from their vehicles to take pictures of us as we went.

At Jorebunglow we took on water, and then proceeded into Ghum, occasionally having to halt to avoid hitting cars and other objects blocking the tracks before they could be moved.

Ghum is a busy place with the daily Joy Trains, at peak season carrying three sections of train four times a day. The first two sections are diesel hauled, while the third is steam. We had to back into the museum siding to get out of the way as all three station tracks would soon be occupied as the locos ran around their trains and prepared to return.

After some delicious momos from the station stall and a brief visit to the museum, we again hopped the freight and rode it around Batasia loop and into Darjeeling. We stopped at West Point for water, as there is no water available in the station.

During dinner at the legendary Glenary's, word came to us that the railway planned on ferrying the locomotive and wagons back to Kurseong the next day. This would be a good opportunity to photograph downhill running, cab-first. Although a turntable exists at Darjeeling, it is not used for regular operations, locomotives always run nose-first towards Darjeeling and cab-first towards Siliguri, running around their trains at either end of the Joy Train route or full service train route.

We followed the train around Batasia loop and picked up a few shots that were missed or fudged the previous day due to traffic on the roads. The remnants of the Rangbull Ropeway and the Samdup Dargay Choeling monastery in Sonada were among the highlights.

The Darjeeling Sheds

The sheds in Darjeeling are a busy place – with the Joy Trains running at full tilt, I counted at least 10 workers busying themselves with prepping

B-Class locomotives and making repairs in that fashion that they do so well – with a hammer and basic blacksmith's tools in the open-air forge. Steam is a technology that can be locally maintained often with the most basic of tools, without reliance on large foreign parts supply chains.

With Tindharia works coming back up to speed, things are looking up for the railway's ability to fully maintain its own equipment rather than shipping off to other facilities. Calls to the warranty department at North British Locomotive Works naturally go unanswered these days.

Mid-morning found B-Class 786 (16212/1904) being prepped for the afternoon Joy Train runs, while the oil-fired B-Class O1, built in 2003, handled the morning steam service. Behind O1 stood 791 (20640/1914) which appeared to have been freshly used, and in front of that 779 'Himalayan Bird' (3882/1892). Parked further down to the back of the shed in a row were 804 (23302/1925), 782 'Mountaineer' (4561/1899) and the 1919-built 795 'Bronco', both of which have been in the same place for quite some time.

Inspiring stroll

With the Joy Trains sold out for the foreseeable future, I walked 3.4 kilometers along the track to Ghum, getting some good views of the hills along the way; the sun was out and the weather was perfect and spring-like up at the 7500 foot elevation, with clouds drifting off the mountains and forests in the distance.

At Batasia loop I walked in just in time to catch the steam hauled Joy Train headed by O1 circle down the loop. At Ghum I took a more extended look at the museum – there are many fine historical photos and

Left: Darjeeling sheds, another hive of activity. Some reports from India have suggested that the sheds were recently damaged by a rock fall.

Below left: Make way for the train – a keen eye ahead as the line squeezes a path through the Kurseong bazaar.

Above right: A quality souvenir – these models of the DHR locos, hand-made close to the line's Tindharia works, are popular with many visitors.

Below: Another very typical view showing the unique appeal of the Darjeeling line – 802 and its short train traverse Bridge 55.



descriptions on display, providing a quick historical overview of the railway for curious visitors.

After some time, all three sections of the late afternoon Joy Train came trundling in – the two diesel trains and the steam service led by 786, the locomotive that was earlier being prepped at the sheds. The diesels ran around their trains, and then the steam service arrived, doing its dance and taking quite a bit longer to water up, oil and dump ashes while the two diesel sections departed.

When 786 finally departed at about half-past four, I got the shot I had come for, with the locomotive running by a fruit stall just downhill from the points. After a long walk back and another dinner at Glenarys, it was off to sleep our final night in the hills and prep for our return the next day.

On Saturday 30th May, we made a stop at Tindharia on the way down to visit model maker Anurag Lakandry. This gentleman and several helpers in his tiny trackside shop

makes wonderful aluminum models of B-Class locomotives of varying sizes that are sold in a multitude of places. These handmade, local items stand out from the plethora of cheap plastic tourist knick-knacks that are ubiquitous to bazaars the world over.

From there we went straight to the airport, and after making the long journey home on three consecutive flights, I slept deeply, with dreams of those shrill steam whistles echoing in my head... **NGW**

More Information

Thanks to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society for help with this feature. If you are a fan of the Darj, membership of the DHRS should be a must, the UK-based society having significant influence on the line. Details can be found at www.dhrs.org

Mike has very kindly made his entire photo library from his trip, some 465 images over 14 galleries, available for **NGW** readers to view. The fully searchable archive is at <https://tinyurl.com/darjeeling2026>





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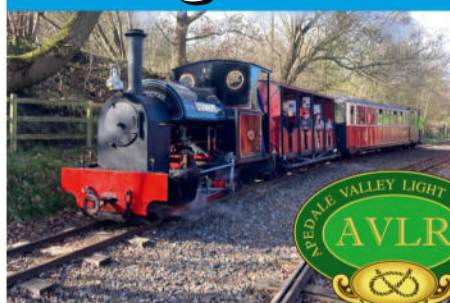
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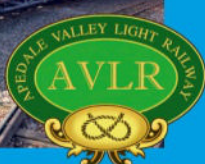
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Andrew Charman reports on a brave and highly successful experiment in taking garden railways to the masses.

It is fair to say that over many years the narrow gauge has revolutionised the very niche hobby of garden railway modelling – in the process making it rather less niche. LGB with its solid track-powered models of German prototypes spearheaded the growth of G Scale on 45mm gauge track, while 16mm scale, initially mainly on 32mm gauge, provided an excellent basis for the growth of live steam models in the garden, since expanding to become today one of the most well-supported model scales.

The best garden railways are those that compliment and enhance the flowerbeds, often (though not always), contributed by a co-operative partner, which led to the thought that garden railway scales should promote themselves at one of the major flower shows, such as Chelsea. More than a decade has passed since your editor, when editing the 16mm Association's members' journal, sat on a board that got a long way down the road to exhibiting at a major show, only for the project to fall apart – I've often thought that one unspoken factor worrying us was that our model trains would be regarded as heresy in the rarified world of gardening, where proponents are happy discussing flowers with long Latin names and hanging on every word of the likes of Alan Titchmarsh and Monty Don.

In May this year, Andy Christie took on the challenge. Andy is a well-known figure in the 16mm world and when not training drivers of trains on the UK's main-line railways, is intimately involved in full-size preservation, notably the Glyn Valley Tramway revival project at Chirk.

Part of the garden

In your editor's view the most effective garden railways are those actually carved into a garden, weaving a route between flower beds, carving cuttings and building »

Above: Watched by a fascinated audience, Andy Christie tops up one of the live-steam locos on the layout that proved a highlight among many of the visitors to the BBC Gardeners' World show at the Birmingham NEC.

Right: Getting a gold – Andy and Louise with BBC Gardener's World presenter Frances Tophill.

Below: Times when the layout did not have a crowd around it were few.

Photos by Phil Parker and Andrew Charman



embankments just like navvies would have done on the real narrow gauge. Andy did not have that option with a short lived-show garden on a site which in the rest of the year is part of a Birmingham NEC car park. He built the basic frame at home and backed by the planting skills of his wife Louise and a small team of helpers, erected it on site, bringing in the soil and such to provide a home for various plants acquired for the project. Railwayania adornments added an extra element, right up to a locomotive chimney borrowed from the Severn Valley Railway.

So how did the garden world react to a model railway invasion? Better than anyone might have expected. We visited on Saturday; I wanted to see Andy's efforts for myself while Rosemary, Mrs C, is big into her flowers and gardening.

On the Friday Andy and Louise had featured heavily on TV, in the edition of *BBC Gardeners' World* dedicated to the show with the segment mainly filmed on the Christies' home garden line – clearly the TV people were very taken with the whole

thing, the backdrop to the programme intro being the show exhibit. Every time we returned to it during the day, there was a crowd around the layout, with more than one person telling your editor that they had come specifically to see the trains.

And the crowning glory? The exhibit won a gold medal, the icing on the cake of an excellent effort that had done much to

advance the cause of garden railways, especially narrow gauge ones... **NGW**

■ The episode of the *BBC Gardeners' World* TV show featuring Andy's home and show layouts can be watched at the following link: bit.ly/4fwsK09

Below: The garden show layout was no minor undertaking – created entirely on a car park.



Large scale, Maxi fun...

More from the larger modelling scales and something that will have Tallyllyn and Corris fans drooling and checking their bank accounts – the latest engineering sample of the forthcoming 16mm scale Hughes Falcon 0-4-2ST on its way from Maxitrak.

The long-established maker of larger ride-on miniature railways took over the Accucraft UK 16mm and G-scale business recently and judging by these pictures the business is in good hands. The loco is shown as running as no 3 'Sir Haydn' in its early days on the Tallyllyn, which was also the form it saw out its final days on the Corris – the correct Corris livery will also be available.

Mechanically the loco will be to Accucraft's long-proven and reliable standards – there must now be thousands of the firm's locos running on garden railways. We are told the loco is very close to production at a price to be determined – more details are at www.accucraft.uk.com

Also new from the Accucraft division of Maxitrak and likely to be tempting to many a garden modeller seeking a powerful 'turn on and go' locomotive is the 0-6-0 Fowler jackshaft diesel – the Leeds firm produced many of these prior to the Second World War, exporting them around the world.

The battery-powered model will be available with radio control and sound options – it will use drive components from long-established manufacturer Essel Engineering, with flangeless centre wheels to enable traversing of tighter curves, mounted in a steel chassis with a 3D-printed body on top. It will also be gauge adjustable between 32mm and 45mm.

Anticipated price is between £795 and £850 but if you'd like one you need to register your interest with Maxitrak – the website is www.maxitrak.com

MODEL LINES

Narrow gauge at the Gala

The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway's annual Gala on 4th-6th September will again feature the now established model railway exhibition in the display sheds at Welshpool Raven Square, as well as the garden railway show at Llanfair High School, now run by W&L members.

The Welshpool exhibits are set to include some 14 narrow gauge layouts or those with an element of narrow gauge, ranging from 009 up to G-scale and GN15. Among them will be at least one brand-new layout and one making its first public appearance for some years.

Highlights will include the Corris-inspired 'Garreg Wen' and a model of the Vale of Rheidol Railway's Devil's Bridge station, while the popular 'Museum of Transport' will make a return appearance.

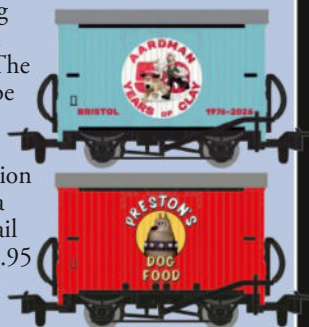
Meanwhile W&L members are working very hard in the hopes of having the line's new permanent model railway display open in its Connections Visitor Centre at Llanfair Caereinion for the Gala. This will feature a remarkable 7mm model of the W&L and Welshpool main-line station in GWR days, as well as the Dylan Thomas-inspired 'Llareggub' featured in *NGW*200.

Also if you want to pass the time with *NGW* editor Andrew Charman, he will be stewarding Cloverlands Model Car Museum, also part of the Connections complex. Details of the Gala are at <https://wllr.org.uk/events/steam-gala/>

Cracking contraptions?

This might not be particularly impressive to our more purist modellers but for those who have children, or grandchildren... Peco has got heavily into limited editions amongst its 009 models in recent times and the latest is a set of wagons featuring companies made famous by everyone's favourite claymation TV characters Wallace & Gromit.

Celebrating 50 years of Aardman Studios, which has made the Wallace & Gromit TV shows and movies, the set of five wagons will be liveried for Aardman itself, the 'Top Bun traditional bakery' and 'Bake-O-Lite' from *A Matter of Loaf and Death*, and 'Wash 'n' Go' and 'Preston's Dog Food' from *A Close Shave*. The set is due to be released in September as a limited edition box set with a suggested retail price of £169.95 – all except the Aardman wagon will also be sold separately. Details at <https://peco-uk.com>



Creating Corris

Your editor sometimes wonders if correspondent **Phil Barnes** has a secret camera overlooking the *NGW* production desk... In that brief period between last month's issue going to press and it hitting the streets, with its feature showing readers how the Corris Railway is great inspiration for a model, Phil sent in these pictures from the recent model railway exhibition at the standard gauge Bluebell Railway, of the delightful 'Upper Corris' built in 009 scale by James Goddard.

On a board measuring just 4ft x 2ft James has imagined the Corris line being extended to meet up with the Talylyn Railway – and before you scoff in the 19th century there was a real proposal to extend and upgrade the then horse-worked Upper Corris Tramway to connect with its similarly gauged neighbour further west. That's why in the pictures one can see

Talylyn locos, especially in what we assume is the Bryn Eglwys quarry.

The layout is a very design, basically an oval and siding using just five points, but with excellent modelling and delightful use of scenic details such as the signature slate slab fencing, James has certainly captured the atmosphere of both of the mid-Wales 2ft 3in gauge lines.

Now, we wonder if we will see a modern interpretation of the Corris, as suggested in last month's issue...





Tin Turtle in 3D from Fourdees

■ The latest offering from purveyors of fine resin locomotive kits in 009, Fourdees Limited, will appeal to many a modeller, being the 'Tin Turtle' – the Motor Rail Simplex tractor that was fitted with varying degrees of protective bodywork for operation on the front lines of the First World War.

There are two versions available – the Protected variant comes with armoured body plating and doors, plus a canopy-style roof while the Armoured type is fully enclosed with the driver viewing the route ahead via narrow letterbox windows.

Both versions are supplied with a one-piece 3D-printed body with fine rivet detail really showing the quality this technology can

produce today, plus a useful static chassis enabling the model to be displayed on a siding or similar – standard 009 coupler pockets and couplings are also supplied.

Both versions can also be motorised, using a Toma Model Works mechanism, which is simply secured using a pair of self-tapping screws. The mechanism is also available from Fourdees and is said to be an excellent and smooth slow runner.

Produced by Fourdees Limited

Web: www.fourdees.co.uk Email: shop@fourdees.co.uk

Prices: Static kit, £19.99 plus post. Toma power unit £69.99

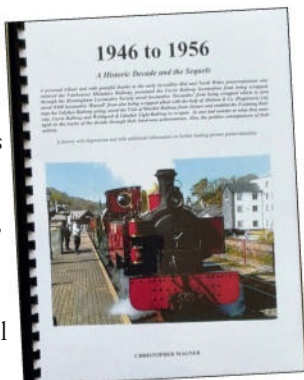
1946 to 1956 – A Historic Decade and the Sequels

Chris Magner

■ Enthusiast Chris Magner continues his passion for in-depth research on the fortunes of the railways of mid and north Wales with this latest work, documenting the pivotal decade between 1946 and 1956 and what it led to for the Corris, Fairbourne, Ffestiniog, Vale of Rheidol, Welshpool & Llanfair and Welsh Highland lines.

Chris describes his works as tributes to the personalities of the time, in particular figures lesser-known in preservation such as Oliver Veltom, the head British Railways man at Oswestry. One should look beyond the 'home production', ring binding and the few photos reproduced via high quality photocopying, to the great deal of interesting text, most taken from words published at the time and revealing many personal stories. One can smile today at comments such as the opinion of one Michael Davies after walking the route of the former Welsh Highland Railway in 1950 that any revival would be "beyond comprehension", but this work does emphasise just how big the challenges were for the early revivalists.

The result is not only a great deal of reading but something interestingly different to the well-documented official histories of these lines over the years. Chris is



not formerly marketing this publication but *NGW* readers who would like their own copy can contact him at the email address below. *AC*

Published by Chris Magner
contact via Email:
chrismagner45@yahoo.co.uk



Diana and train go west...

■ Long-established supplier of 009 equipment Light Railway Stores has announced a tie-up with Rapido Trains and Peco to offer a complete Great Western Railway (GWR) train.

The company has commissioned exclusive versions of the new Rapido Kerr, Stuart 0-4-0T 'Diana', the Peco Glyn Valley Tramway four-wheeled carriage and three of the new Rapido wagon range, all in Great Western Railways livery – plain green for the loco, chocolate and cream for the carriage (the return of a livery last offered by Light Railway Stores in 2018) and the standard GWR livery for the freight stock.

The models will only be available from Light Railway Stores.

Produced for Light Railway Stores by Rapido Trains and Peco.

Web: www.lightrailwaystores.co.uk Email info@lightrailwaystores.co.uk

Prices: Kerr, Stuart Sirdar locomotive £119, Peco GVT carriage £38.00, Rapido dropside open wagon (earlier or later livery) £23.50, covered van £25.50, brake van £27.00.



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Katie at Fairbourne

Can I add some further details regarding the Heywood loco 'Katie' at the end of its first career? (Waite's World, *NGW*203)

Katie was not in the best of health and 'Count Louis' coming to Fairbourne in April 1925 spelled the end of Katie as a Loco – the boiler was placed outside the shed and the cylinders and such removed in 1926 or '27. The remaining chassis was converted to a four-wheeled wagon which ran until 1939.

During rebuilding of the line, the 'frames' were found in the sand hills and kept with the spare rails near to the current passing loop before being brought into the extended rear yard, where I first saw them in 1970.

In early 1972, I received a phone call from Mr Graham Vincent of the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn Wharf, who had been in discussions with Mr John Wilkins (Chairman of the Fairbourne), regarding the transfer of Katie's frames to the NGRM trustees. No progress had been made, so I was asked to bring their interest forward when next on duty at Fairbourne.

The outcome was that on 28th May 1972, a 'Working Party' arrived from Tywyn complete with a Land Rover and trailer and transferred Katie to the museum.

Interestingly on that day, I was driving the Guest 2-4-2 'Katie' on the service trains – I gave a whistle salute to Katie's last day at Fairbourne from my engine. Later that day, leaving Barmouth Ferry I noticed a sudden change in the weather, with rain heading my way and I got soaked!

Some three weeks later on 18th June, I presented myself at Tywyn Wharf for a visit to the museum, to see the frames – they were on display.

Could I state here, that; "The



"I was embarrassed to see nothing but a view blocked by saplings and greenery when we emerged..."

Above: Today's 'Katie', seen here at the Ravensglass & Eskdale Gala in May, retains the frames of its inspiration, see the letter from Hugh Sykes.

Photo: Matt Ditch

Below: Ffestiniog Fairlie 'Merddin Emrys' fresh out of overhaul and set for a hot day's work on 23rd June that would prove challenging – see the letter from David Gulliver.



Frames of Heywood locomotive 'Katie' were presented to the Narrow Gauge Railway Museum at Tywyn, by Mr John Wilkins Chairman of the Fairbourne Railway Ltd."

In John Milner's excellent *Rails through the Sand*, the date of 1974 is quoted (*for Katie's transfer*), however this is for the Duffield Bank Railway tipping wagon which was transferred in April 1974, where to this day it remains on display.

Of course, 50 years have since passed and today we have, using the original frames, a superb recreation of our 'Katie' and it even came back recently on holiday. I believe all those involved 'Yesterday and Today', would be very proud. **Hugh Sykes**

Andrew C replies: Thanks as ever to Hugh for putting the record straight – younger readers may not be aware that Hugh was intimately involved with the Fairbourne Railway over many years.

Austrian memories

I fully concur with Robert Day's comments on Austrian hospitality in *NGW*203. There is indeed a delightful ambiguity about life in Austria: things that are not allowed are sometimes allowed – this was one of the reasons I moved to Vienna in 1984 and stayed for 33 years.

The emphasis is, however, on 'sometimes' for such matters were often at the whim of an individual and the answer could well be a brusque "geht nicht" (no way). My requests to inspect the steam locos at Ternitz steelworks, the Neusiedler paper factory or ÖMV all met with such answers.

The usually very reliable Josef Pospichal website identifies 100.11 as WLF 3237/1939. What it certainly cannot be is Krauss Maffei 7159/1916 since these two companies only merged their interests in 1931; however, Krauss, Munich 7159/1916 was 100.6.

I'm sure that, as Robert says, there was over the years much swapping of parts at Donawitz and we can only

speculate how much of 100.6 ended up in 100.11, or vice-versa.

Keith Chester

Challenging days and views

Festiniog Railway 'Merddin Emrys' looked remarkably good in its 'temporary' unlined black livery at the end of the day on Tuesday 23rd June. As my photo shows the loco had brought in the afternoon 'Woodland Wanderer' from Tan-y-Bwlch and run round in preparation for returning the stock to Boston Lodge. The hot and sun-soaked platform was devoid of people.

The day had been challenging for the staff and for some of the passengers too. Arriving at about 10.40 that morning I caught a distant glimpse of Merddin Emrys double heading the departing 'Quarryman' with the diesel 'Vale of Ffestiniog'. Anxious to capture the spirit of my first journey in 1958, we boarded the Woodland Wanderer which departed at 11.10 pulled by another Fairlie, 'David Lloyd George'.

During a long warm wait at Minffordd it became obvious that something was wrong. Some passengers with children had to be moved to another carriage. I gathered from the staff that the Blaenau Ffestiniog train had not cleared the next section. By the time we moved on the better part of half an hour had been lost. Maybe halfway through the woodlands we came to a stop, but after a difficult restart we eventually reached Tan-y-Bwlch.

The problem was a 'gunge' on the rail heads, the result I believe of a mixture of sap and insect activity. On arrival it was announced that the departure would be put back half an hour to 13.15. Concerned that we were also booked to make a return journey to Rhyd Ddu on the Welsh Highland Railway leaving at 14.05, I spoke to a member of staff who was extremely helpful and rang through to ensure that we made our connection. Back at Porthmadog several members of staff assisted us in making the transfer in the ten

minutes available. Their help was most appreciated.

Against the losses due to the Covid period, I must say that the Woodland Wanderer with its heritage stock combined with the facilities at Tan-y-Bwlch has been an inspired innovation. We booked for the full line 'Gold' journey on the Thursday but cancelled when it became clear that a temperature of 30 degrees C would be exceeded – maybe a challenge all lines have to address, especially if they aspire to 'Pullman' class services.

Lastly, where the scenery is part of the offer then its loss is a problem. The Ffestiniog and the Vale of Rheidol have been well aware of this. However, having extolled the beauty of the pass of Aberglaslyn to a member of the family who had not travelled on the WHR before, I was embarrassed to see nothing but a view blocked by saplings and greenery when we emerged from the tunnel.

By the way, is a timetable without Monday, Wednesday and Friday departures from Porthmadog right for this time in the holiday season? Also you have to be an enthusiast to realise that you can, as we did, make shorter journeys to Beddgelert or Rhyd Ddu on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I know there will be a rational reason but is there another solution?

David Gulliver

Andrew C replies: David eloquently describes many of the issues that face heritage railways daily. Having once been the fireman of a Welshpool train that had to be failed and rescued by a diesel because nothing I did would persuade the loco to steam, I sympathise with the FR crew.

As for the 'green tunnel' that is another never-ending challenge – if you are able to cut back excessive greenery, for example if it is on your land, then you need the resources, i.e. people. The W&L has been very successful at this in recent years with a volunteer group first known as the 'Hedgebashers', now 'Fence2Fence' – but they never have time to pause as the greenery keeps growing.

Finally timetabling – a massive challenge in today's environment. It's no use running loads of trains if they are not going to be filled, and in the current environment even when on holiday the visitors are being a lot more careful with their money...

Errata

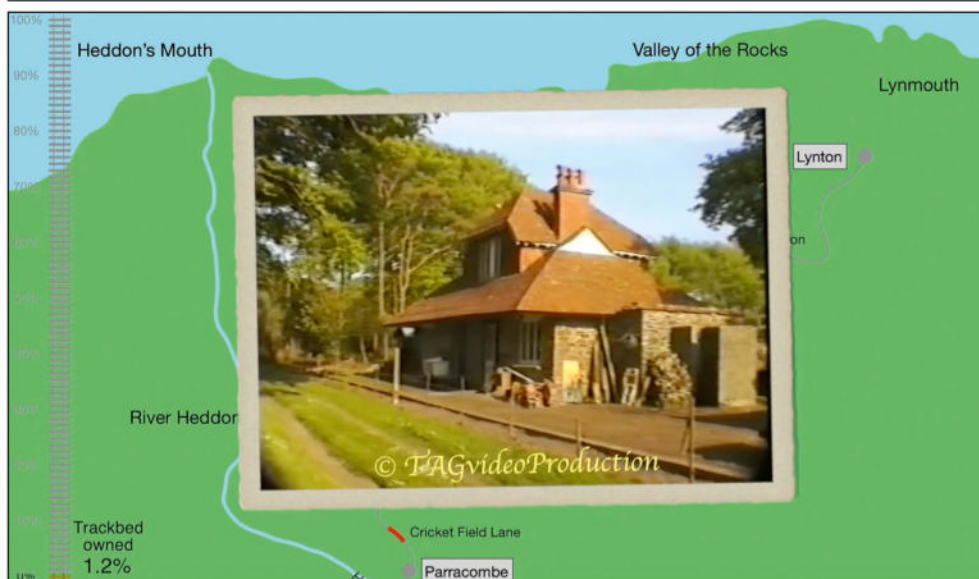
A slip of the editorial pen cut a decade from the life of the Palma to Arta line in Majorca, commented on in David Bott's letter last month. The line closed in 1977, not 1967 as stated – our apologies.

From a different age...



■ On the next page we report on the earliest stirrings of the Llanberis Lake Railway, and this photo by *Graham Fairhurst* is from those formative years when the locos in steam were likely to range beyond the resident Quarry Hunslets. This was due to the works of Hills & Bailey being based at the Giffach Ddu yard of the former Dinwroic Quarry, before Tony Hills went off to build the Brecon Mountain Railway. One of his locos, Orenstein & Koppel 0-4-0 12722, built in 1936 is seen raising steam alongside the resident Hunslet 0-4-OST 'Dolbardar'. The O&K is today at the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway in Kent.

Video Watch: online films for the narrow gauge enthusiast



Online video sites which encourage users to upload their own clips, such as YouTube and Vimeo, provide great sources of narrow gauge items. If you've seen a clip that our readers would enjoy, why not send in the link?

The Lynton & Barnstaple Railway project comes in for a fair bit of criticism so it's nice to find this film celebrating what has been achieved. Keith Edwards crams a lot into 16 minutes, starting with a potted history of the famed Devon line, through abandonment, early L&B Trust efforts with the 'LynBarn Railway' at the Milky Way Adventure Park, the purchase and restoration of Woody Bay station, first trains, new build locos, recreated carriages and everything that has happened since. There's plenty of period video, mostly provided by serial L&B documentary expert Trevor Garnham, in what is a short but absorbing watch. bit.ly/4aM7AZw

What is it?

■ How well do you know your narrow gauge locomotives? Can you recognise one just by looking at its frames? If so, what is this? To give you a clue, the picture was taken a good few years ago. The answer is over the page...



That was the year that...

Narrow gauge news stories from the archives and their legacy...

From 60 years ago

Bicton Woodland Railway (1ft 6in gauge)

'Woolwich' is now usually only steamed at weekends, and 'Carnegie' works the line at other times. This diesel is extremely slow; one gear produces a speed of about 4mph, while the only other gear causes the engine to run hot. The proprietors apparently have great faith in the loco's haulage powers, for it is now intended to construct a branch line to the Hermitage, which was the originally-planned destination of the line, but was rejected because it would involve gradients too steep for the motive power. (NGN, August 1966)

The branch was indeed built and the Avonside 0-4-0 Woolwich and Hunslet diesel Carnegie soldiered on until 2000 when they were replaced by new motive power sourced from Alan Keef Ltd. Thankfully after some travelling both of the historic Woolwich Arsenal locos would find a new and secure home at the Statfold Narrow Gauge Trust.

A Railway round Lake Padarn?

Mr Douglas Carrington, chairman of the 'Maid Marian' Locomotive Fund, has sent a news cutting from the *Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald* which reports that Mr Gordon Ward, of 4 Maes Padarn, Llanberis, is trying to obtain support for the construction of a narrow gauge line round Llyn Padarn; on the west shore this would use the roadbed of the BR Llanberis branch (now being lifted) and on the east shore the roadbed of the Padarn Railway. Only short connecting links, including a bridge over the river, would have to be built at the north and south ends of the lake.

With the typical vagueness of newspapers about railway matters, the report states that; "the rail used by the Dinorwic Quarry in the old days, which has now been uprooted and is lying idle, is of the right gauge, 1ft 11½in" (sic!). (NGN, August 1966)

A first suggestion of what five years later would emerge as the Llanberis Lake Railway. The line built was rather more modest, running two miles along the east shore on the trackbed of the former Padarn line. Interestingly in 2003 an extension was added around the bottom of the lake to connect to Llanberis, while much of the former BR trackbed remains today as a walking and cycle path...

The 'sic' in the quoted passage, by the way, is because the editor of Narrow Gauge News clearly expected his fellow members to know that the track used in the Dinorwic Quarries was actually of 1ft 10¾in gauge! Though the Llanberis Lake Railway was indeed eventually built to 1ft 11½in...

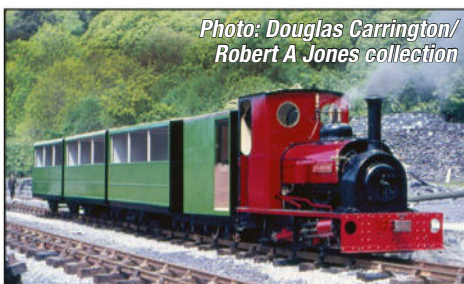


Photo: Douglas Carrington/
Robert A Jones collection

Isle of Man

This year's grant to the Manx Electric Railway includes a large sum for the commencement of relaying on the Snaefell Mountain line. Some members of Tynwald wanted the line converting into a road but fortunately were in a minority... The Commission recommends that the Laxey-Ramsey section (of the MER) be abandoned, as it has lighter traffic than the rest of the system and is now due for relaying. One would think that a possible solution would be to reduce it to single track. (NGN, August 1966)

Some things never change... You can still travel to Ramsey on the MER on double track, but such suggestions refuse to go away, made in the Manx Parliament as recently as the last year or so...

Extracts from Narrow Gauge News, the news journal of the Narrow Gauge Railway Society – for more details of the Society and how to join up, go to www.ngrs.org.uk or see the advert on page 45.



Diary & Special Events

■ No responsibility can be accepted for dates on these pages and anyone planning a visit for a ride or to an event should check the line's website and/or social media feeds for the latest update. Not all trains operate over full lines.

Special Events in August

Only events of interest to rail enthusiasts are included in this guide.

■ **Daily except Mon, plus 31st, Devon Railway Centre Open Day** Museum nr Tiverton, 2ft gauge line. <http://devonrailwaycentre.co.uk>

■ **Wed-Sun, Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway open.** Kent 2ft gauge line, www.bwlr.co.uk. Steam and model show on 2nd.

■ **Wed-Sun plus 31st, Statfold Country Park trains.** Staffs, museum open Fridays, <http://statfold.com>

■ **August, Bressingham Museum;** 1st-2nd Model Engineering Wknd, 8th-9th Steam in Miniature, 29th-30th Festival of Transport.

■ **1st-2nd August, Groudle Glen Railway;** Manx Heritage Transport Festival, Sat diesel-electric day, Sun four steam locos.

■ **1st-2nd August, Manx Heritage Transport Festival;** Various special events across all lines. Details online at bit.ly/3S0sP6Q

■ **7th- 9th August, Tallyllyn Railway Summer Beer Festival;** Real ales and ciders from Wales and Shropshire, garden railway open.

■ **15th-16th August, Beer Heights Light Railway Gala;** Devon 7¼in line, intensive service, Details online at bit.ly/4wYwFK1

■ **22nd August, Tallyllyn Railway Young Members Group Day;** As many roles as possible staffed by young people.

■ **29th-31st August, Bala Lake Railway Steam Gala;** Intensive timetable, freight services, miniature railway, heritage bus to Bala.

■ **30th August, Gartell Light Railway Open Day;** 2ft Somerset line, frequent timetable. 01963 370752, <http://newglr.weebly.com>

■ **31st August, Apedale Valley Light Railway Classic Cars & Steam Trains;** Period cars alongside normal steam services.



There is not much time left to ride the Gartell Light Railway, the line set to close (see *Headline News*). Photo: Donald Brooks

Tramways

- **Douglas Horse Tramway** www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/ Open daily except Mondays. Open 31st. 150th Anniversary 7th
- **Great Orme Tramway:** www.greatormetramway.co.uk Open daily between 10am and 6pm
- **Manx Electric Railway, Snaefell Mountain Railway:** www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/ Isle of Man, 01624 662525, www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/ Daily services. Heritage Transport Festival 1st-2nd
- **Seaton Tramway:** www.tram.co.uk Devon 01297 20375, www.tram.co.uk Daily services from 10am

Miniature Railways

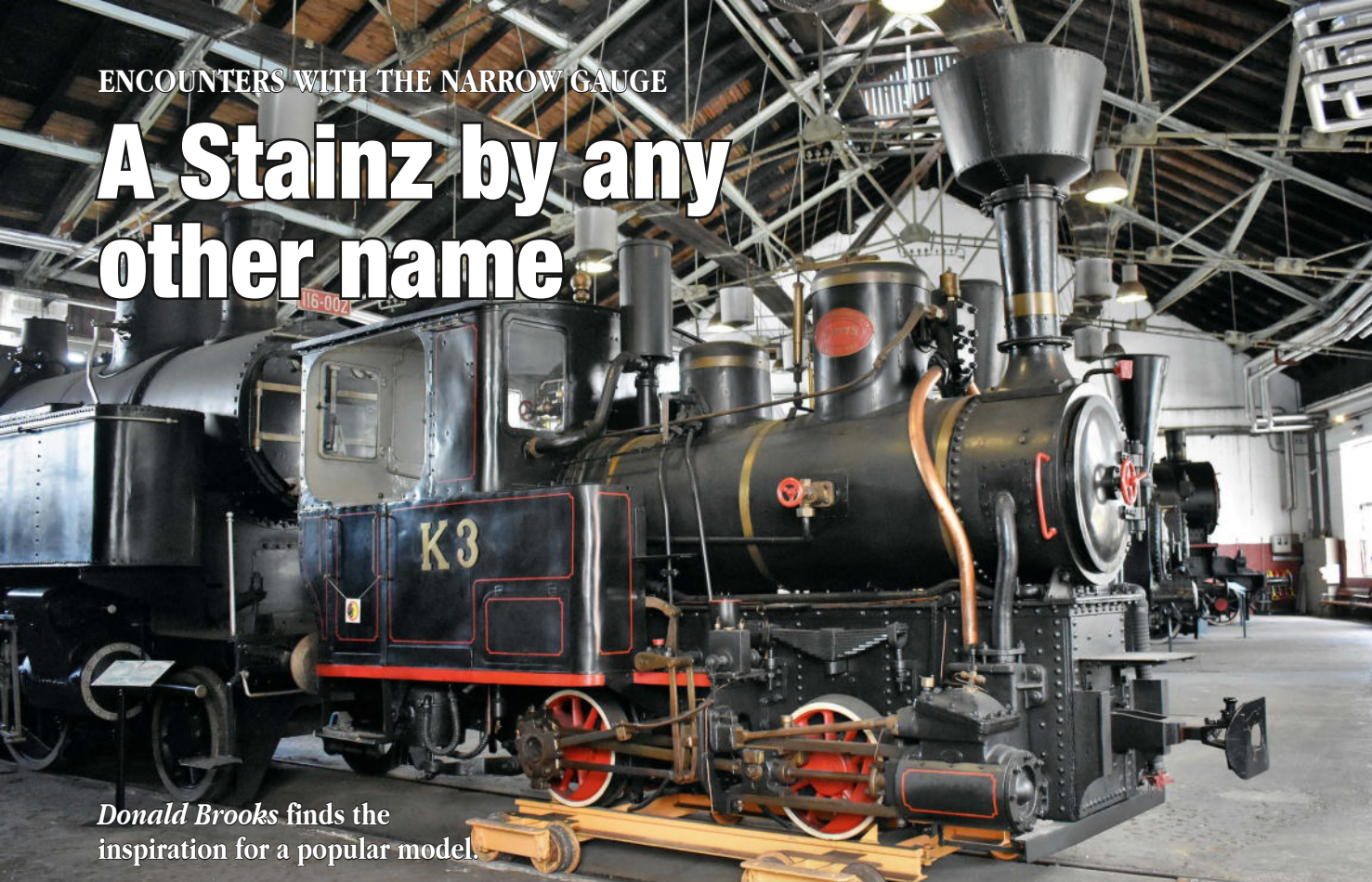
- **Audley End Railway (10.25in):** www.audley-end-railway.co.uk Essex 01799 541354, www.audley-end-railway.co.uk Daily services
- **Lappa Valley Railway (15, 10.25, 7.25in):** www.lappa.com Cornwall 01872 510317, www.lappa.com Open daily. Steam Wknd 18th-19th
- **Littlehampton Miniature Railway (12.25in):** www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com Sussex www.littlehamptonminiaturerailway.com Daily, Steam Gala 14th-16th
- **Moors Valley Railway (7.25in):** www.moorsvalleyrailway.co.uk Hants 01425 471415, www.moorsvalleyrailway.co.uk Daily services
- **North Bay Railway, Scarborough (20in):** www.nbr.org.uk Yorks 01723 368791, www.nbr.org.uk Daily services
- **Rhyl Miniature Railway (15in):** www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk Clwyd 01352 759109, www.rhylminiaturerailway.co.uk Daily services
- **South Downs Light Railway (10.25in):** www.south-downs-railway.com Sussex 07518 753784, www.south-downs-railway.com Wknds, Weds except 5th. Open 31st

Visit our forum: <http://www.narrow-gauge-forum.co.uk>

Answer to 'What is it?': Vale of Rheidol 2-6-2T 'Owain Glyndŵr' – now again a working member of the line's fleet.

What's On	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th	25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th	31st
Alford Valley Community Railway: www.avcr.org.uk																															
Amberley Museum: 01798 831370 www.amberleymuseum.co.uk																															
Amerton Railway: 01785 850965 www.amertonrailway.co.uk																															
Apedale Valley Railway: 0845 094 1953 www.avlr.org.uk																															
Bala Lake Railway: 01678 540666 www.bala-lake-railway.co.uk																															
Brecon Mountain Railway: 01685 722988 www.bmr.wales																															
Bressingham Museum: 01379 686900 www.bressingham.co.uk																															
Bure Valley Railway: 01263 733858 www.bvrw.co.uk																															
Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway 01472 604657 www.cclr.co.uk																															
Corris Railway: 01654 761303, www.corris.co.uk																															
Evesham Vale Lght Rly: 01386 422282 www.valleyrailwayadventure.co.uk																															
Exbury Gardens Railway: 023 80891203 www.exbury.co.uk																															
Fairbourne Railway: 01341 250362 www.fairbournerrailway.com																															
Ffestiniog Railway: 01766 516000 www.festrail.co.uk																															
Golden Valley Light Railway: 01773 747674 www.gvlr.org.uk																															
Great Laxey Mine Railway: 01624 624007 www.laxeyminerrailway.im/																															
Great Whipsnade Rlwy: 0844 225 1826 www.zsl.org/zsl-whipsnade-zoo																															
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Hayling Light Railway: 07902 446340 haylinglightrailway.wixsite.com/ehlr																															
Heatherslaw Light Rly: 01890 820317 www.heatherslawlightrailway.co.uk																															
Isle of Man Steam Rlwy: 01624 663366 www.iombusandrail.im/heritage/																															
Kirklees Light Railway: 01484 865727 www.whistlestopvalley.co.uk																															
Launceston Stm Rlwy: 01566 775 665 www.launcestonr.co.uk																															
Leadhills & Wanlockhead Railway www.leadhillsrailway.co.uk																															
Leighton Buzzard Railway 01525 373888 www.buzzrail.uk																															
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North Gloucestershire Railway: www.toddington-narrow-gauge.co.uk																															
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Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway 01797 362353, www.rhdr.org.uk																															
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Steeple Grange Lght Rly: 01629 55123 www.steeplegrange.co.uk																															
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Teifi Valley Railway: 01559 371077 www.teifivalleyrailway.wales																															
Threlkeld Museum: 01768 779747 www. threlkeldquarryandminingmuseum.co.uk																															
Vale of Rheidol Railway: 01970 625819 http://vor.wales																															
Volks Electric Railway: 01273 292718 http://volksrailway.org.uk																															
Wells Walsingham Railway: 01328 711630 www.wwlr.co.uk																															
Welsh Highland Railway 01766 516000, www.festrail.co.uk																															
Welsh Highland Heritage Railway 01766 513402, www.whr.co.uk																															
Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway 01938 810441, www.wlfr.org.uk																															
West Lancashire Lgt Rly 01772 815881, www.westlancsrailway.org																															
KEY Trains (steam or diesel), Special events, No trains	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

A Stainz by any other name



Donald Brooks finds the inspiration for a popular model.

When garden railway specialist LGB launched its first G-scale locomotive and company logo in 1968 it made an international icon out of 'Stainz', previously a little-known engine from a minor Austrian narrow gauge line.

The now-famous 760mm gauge 0-4-0T, Krauss-Linz 2774 of 1892, was actually the second of four built for lines in Steiermark (Styria) and, along with sister loco no 1 'Meran', originally worked the lightly-trafficked 11.3 kms from Preding-Wieselsdorf to the small town of Stainz.

The only time I ever saw the loco was in 1997, when it was tucked in the back of a shed at Murau on the Muralbahn, another south-east Austrian narrow gauge route, to where it had been transferred in 1969 and survives today. Its original line also survives, as a heritage operation worked by a Romanian 0-8-0T.

Much less well-known are the

other two locos built at the same time as 'Stainz'. No 3 'Gonobitz' and no 4 'Heiligengeist', KL 2775 and 2776 of 1892, worked on the Pölschach – Gonobitz line in Untersteiermark (Lower Styria), which after World War 1 became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, subsequently Yugoslavia and today the independent republic of Slovenia.

Like the Stainz line, this 15km route was opened in 1892 by the provincial operator Steiermärkische Landesbahnen. Following independence from Austria the termini acquired the Slav names Poljčane and Slovenske Konjice, with the line extended six kilometres from the latter to Zreče in the early 1920s. Passenger services ceased in 1962, with complete closure in 1970.

Like 'Stainz', though, 'Gonobitz' survived. In 1930 it was transferred to Jesenice Steelworks, where it was overhauled and continued to work on

Above: 'Gonobitz' stands on a trolley in the Slovenian Railway Museum. The loco no longer carries a name, thought to have been lost when the town of Gonobitz was renamed as Slovenske Konjice. 12th July 2022.

Below:— With its black livery and short side tanks, the anonymous LGB loco on the author's garden railway looks a lot more like a 'Gonobitz' than a 'Stainz'. 3rd September 2022

the internal narrow gauge system until 1974. The steelworks renumbered it O-IV, though in preservation it has reverted to its 1920s number, K3.

Non-identical twin

Today Gonobitz is displayed in the Ljubljana railway museum, where I encountered it in summer 2022. The locomotive is no longer an exact twin of its famous sister, the most obvious external difference being the extended side tanks on Stainz. The site of K3's home railway, up in north east Slovenia, has recently seen an embryo preservation scheme at the former terminus of Zreče, where a short stretch of track has been relaid.

Another ex-Jesenice Steelworks locomotive, O-IX (formerly 71-012) 0-6-0T Orenstein & Koppel 10168 of 1922, has been transferred from the Ljubljana museum in operational condition to join Orenstein & Koppel O-XI (71-023), already plinthed there. 71-012 was ceremonially launched in June 2021, the first loco to steam at Zreče since closure.

Going back to the LGB model, most owners of G-scale garden railways will have owned a 'Stainz' and I am no exception, currently operating one that has never carried either a name or a number. As it is in black livery, perhaps I should call it 'Gonobitz', though even with the name it would scarcely match the accurate model of the loco actually produced as a one-off variant of Stainz by LGB itself in 1995. **NGW**





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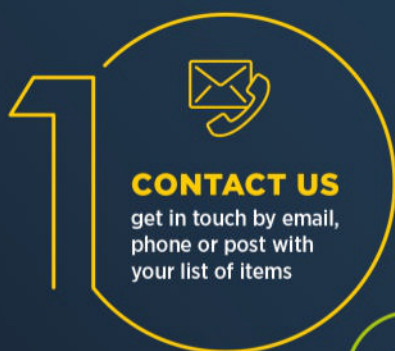
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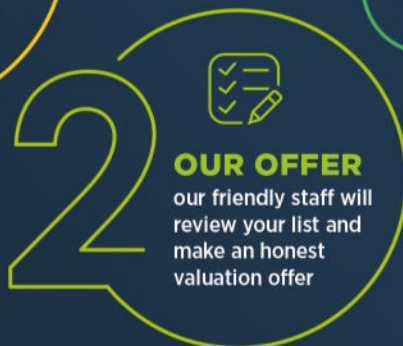
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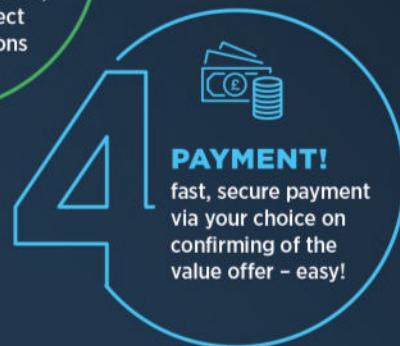
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